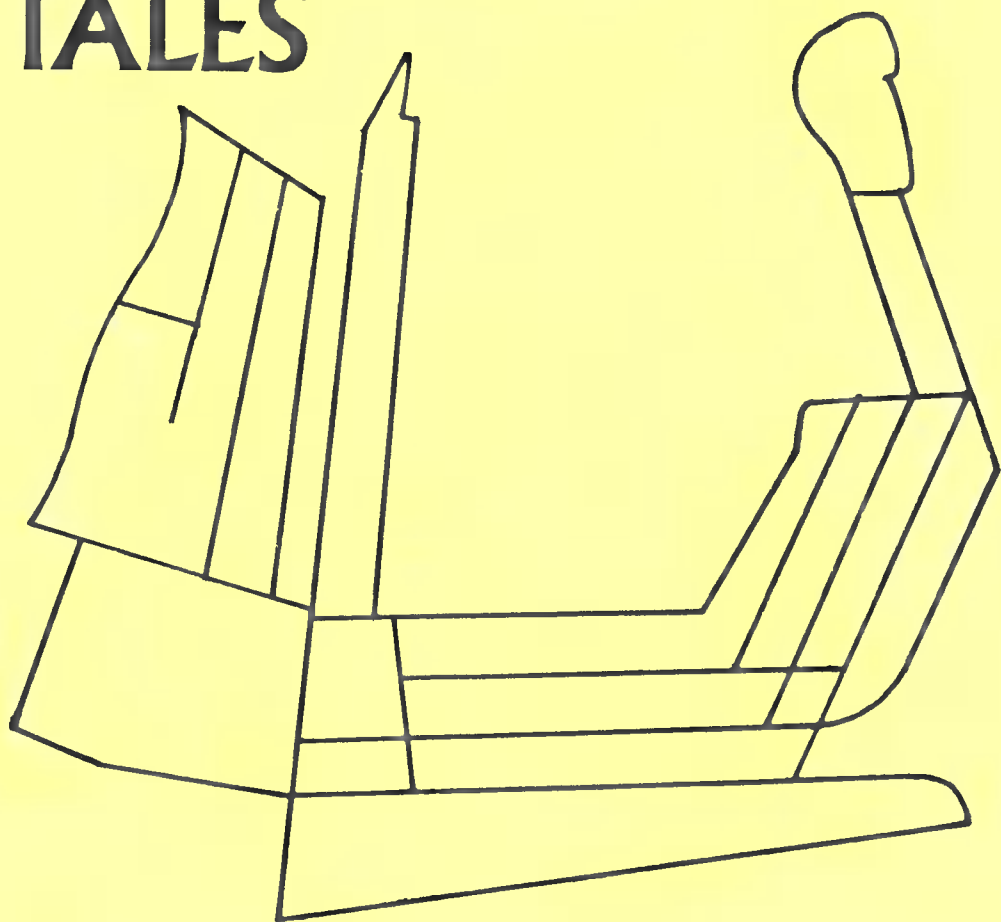


GLASTONBURY TALES



by John A.Greed

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First published.....January 1975.
reprinted.....September 1975

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Published by:- St. Trillo Publications,
St. Trillo House,
92, Hillside Road,
Portishead,
Bristol BS20 8LJ.

Printed by Presto Print,
Quay Street, Bristol 1.

ISBN 0 9503819 0 X

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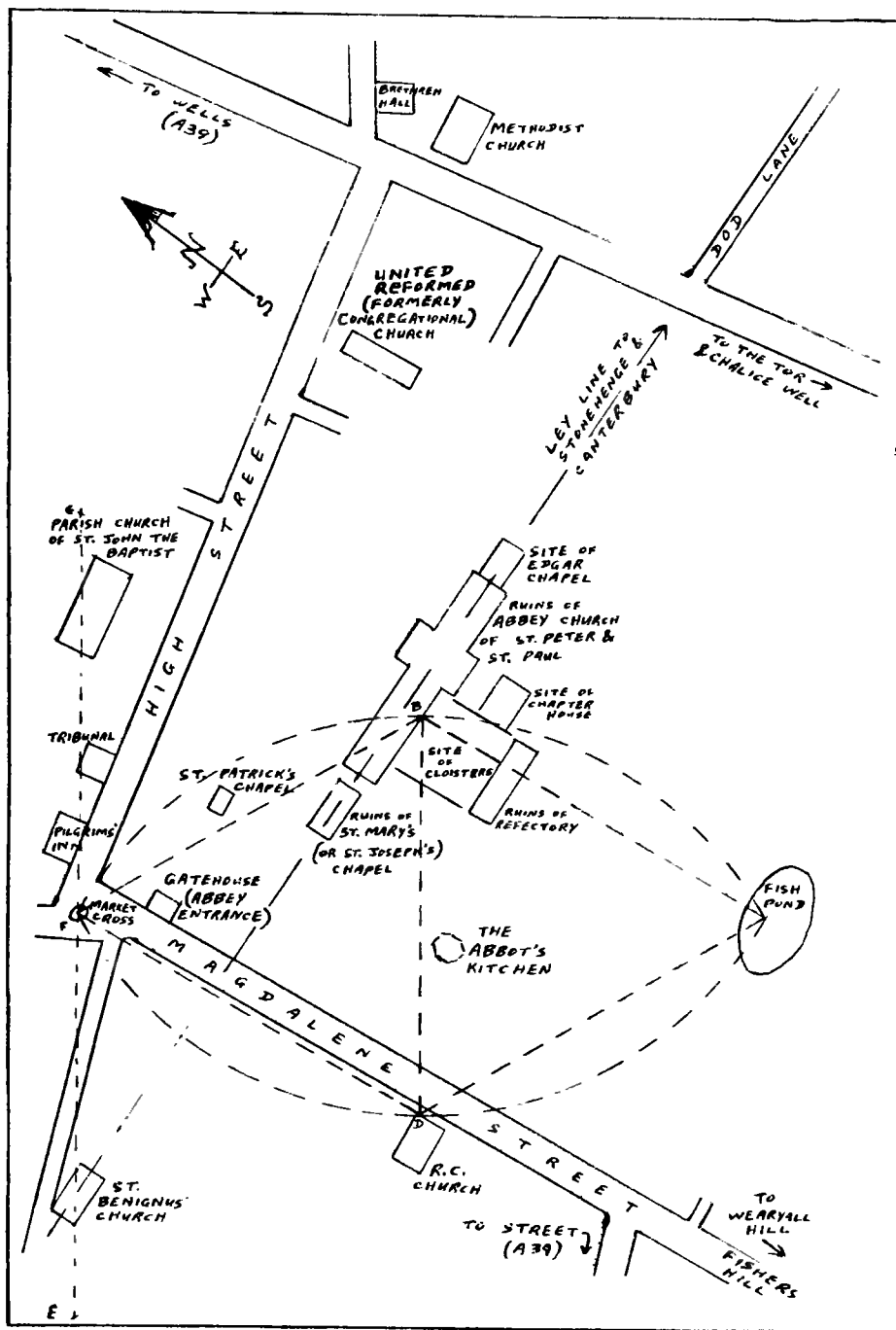


Fig 1. Street Plan of central Glastonbury.

PRELIMINARY INTRODUCTION

(for readers not familiar with Glastonbury town)

Glastonbury is a pleasant Somerset town of about 6,500 inhabitants some twenty-seven miles from Bristol on the main A39 road. It is fourteen miles from the sea, on the edge of the very low-lying plain of Sedgemoor. The surrounding district is chiefly agricultural.

The town has two main streets (High Street and Magdalene Street) forming a letter "L" as shown in fig. 1. Where they meet, a mediaeval cross stands in the shopping centre. The main streets are fairly wide and several free off-street car parks are available close to the central area.

There are two Anglican churches - both of them fine architecture - United Reformed, Methodist and Brethren chapels, and a modern Roman Catholic church. There are a number of ancient buildings, two of the most noteworthy being the Tribunal (a former court house, now used as a museum) and the George and Pilgrims Inn. Right in the centre of the town (and open to the public on payment of a small fee) are the ruins of a large Benedictine abbey.

On the outskirts of the town is an isolated conical hill, the Tor, 521ft. in height, surmounted by the tower of a ruined church.

The town "enjoys" (some would say "endures") a network of legends based on a number of local sites, and these legends form the basis of the subject-matter of this book.

*This book is dedicated to
Pauline E- without whose initial
inspiration it would never have
been started, and to my
wife Clara without whose
ideas and innumerable cups of tea
it would never have been finished in its present form.*

*I wish to thank all who have permitted
me to quote from their copyrighted
material: quotations are acknowledged
individually at appropriate places in
the text.*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION - THE LAKE VILLAGES

Let me begin with a promise: *this book will not contain any long Latin quotations.* Too many books on Glastonbury and its legends have spent much time quoting and comparing ancient authorities which may be fascinating to scholars but are of little interest to ordinary folk. The purpose of this book is not to delve deeply into the evidence for or against the legends, but simply to set out, in an orderly manner, just what the various stories are.

This is easier said than done! A quick glance shows us stories of Joseph of Arimathaea, of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, of Christ Himself, and numerous other figures (some historical, some semi-historical, and some purely legendary) - and all astonishingly mixed up together. To make matters worse, the stories grow; new facts fancies and theories come to light, and more can be written on the subject today than could have been written five years ago. Let us try to unravel the tangle.

The beginning would be a good place to start if only we could find it. For the moment let us take the beginning, for these stories, as being the time of the Glastonbury lake-villages. Some authorities date the founding of these villages as in the first century B.C., others put it two hundred years earlier than that.

What were these villages, who lived in them and what sort of people were they?

To appreciate the answers to these questions we need first to spend a couple of minutes looking at the rather special geography of the area.

Suppose you are standing on top of that 521 ft. hill called Glastonbury Tor, on a clear day. Look away to the west. The waters of the Bristol Channel are visible

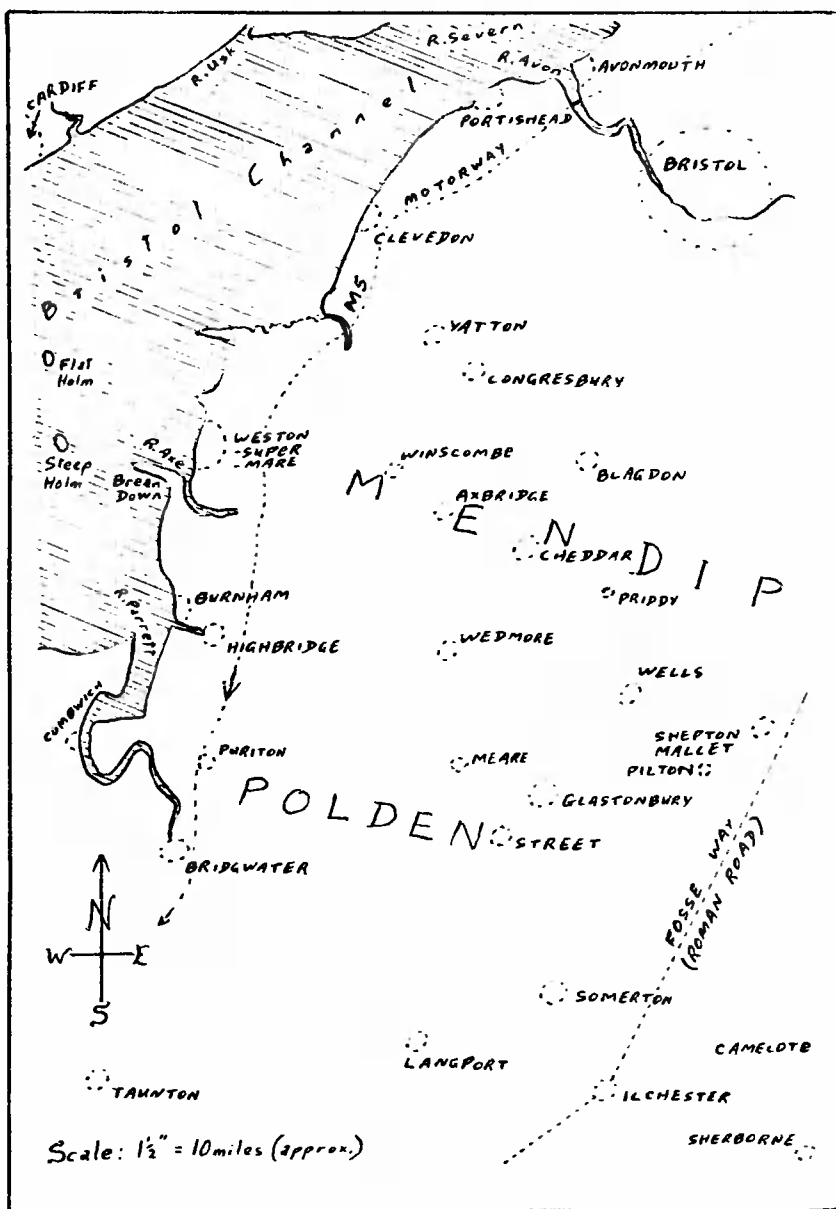


Fig. 2. The Glastonbury District Today.

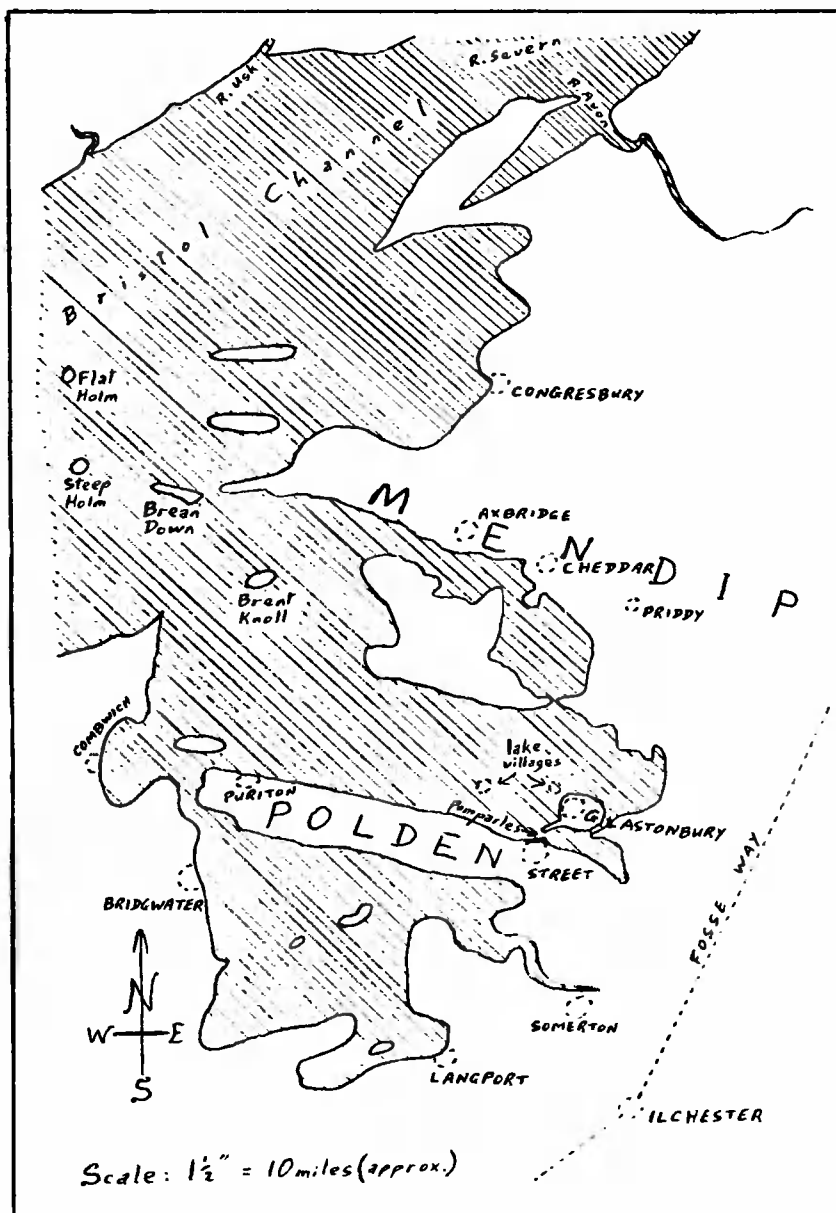


Fig. 3. The Glastonbury District at High Tide in about the year 100 A.D.

fourteen miles away. Stretching from the foot of the Tor to the sea is a great plain of fertile very flat pasture-land, bounded by the Mendip Hills to the north and the little Polden Hills to the south. A glance at the Ordnance Survey map will show that this plain is only about twenty feet above mean sea-level.

The church tower and village of Meare are visible in the plain, about four miles away. The Ordnance map shows a spot-height on the edge of Meare village just eleven feet above sea-level.

Now let us consider the not-too-distant Bristol Channel. It consists of an estuary which is basically cone-shaped, and the tide flowing in from the Atlantic is funnelled between the Glamorgan and Somerset coasts and builds up to become the highest in Europe. (This is the cause of the notable Severn bore.) At Weston-super-Mare, eighteen miles from Glastonbury, there are regularly tides of forty feet - that is twenty feet above and twenty feet below mean sea-level. To this day, nothing but the sea walls along the coast prevents the highest tides from reaching Glastonbury.

Now, as we stand on the Tor looking across the plain, let us try to imagine the scene as it would have been two thousand years ago. At low tide the whole plain is a vast expanse of mud and swamp. At high tide, the sea sometimes reaches almost to the foot of the Tor. Occasionally it may even surround it, as shown in fig. 3.

Amid the reeds of the swamp something moves. The wildfowl fly up with startled cries at the approach of the little men in their dugout canoe. Slings whirl: terra-cotta pellets fly: and soon the hunters are paddling their way homewards after a successful day's hunting. Home, for these tribesmen, is the stockaded lake-village just north-west of where Meare now stands. A second lake-village has been discovered near Godney, closer to Glastonbury.

These villages were built for security. The one near Godney consisted of an artificial island of about three

acres, surrounded by water or swamp. Archaeological finds have shown that it contained between sixty and ninety thatched huts. Around the island was a stockade. There were landing-places for the canoes, and to the higher ground there was a causeway with a drawbridge.

The occupants knew how to make iron tools, bronze household goods and ornaments, and beautifully-patterned pottery. Examples of these wares, and one of their dugout canoes, are today in Glastonbury museum.

To the higher ground east of Glastonbury came the Belgae - a warlike tribe who spread across from south-east England, conquering as they advanced. For a time the villages built among the waters seemed impregnable. Then - it may have been about A.D. 50 - the Belgae attacked in force: and though there were survivors this was the end of the development of the tribe which some scholars have described as the most civilised at that time in the country.

The lake tribesmen were not wiped out - any more than the Anglo-Saxons were wiped out by the coming of the Normans a thousand years later - but they ceased to have their own way of life. Some no doubt became slaves of the Belgae. Others had been absorbed into the stronger tribe by marriage: at times the tribes had lived side by side in comparative peace. In other parts of the country there were other tribes - but all belonging to the branch of mankind which scholars describe as Celtic. Gradually some sort of unity between the tribes had appeared, so that by this time - despite their wars - there was probably a king over the whole group of tribes. Together we call them Ancient Britons.

In 55 B.C. this country was invaded by Julius Caesar in a half-hearted manner. He did not progress into western Britain. It was not until almost a century later that any part of the West Country became subjected to the Roman armies. A.D. 43 saw the beginnings of conquest in earnest: by A.D. 47 the Romans had reached Somerset, but stopped short of Glastonbury. The Fosse Way (see fig. 2) marks the frontier of that time.

The Britons varied greatly. Some of them were sailors, trading over surprising distances - there are traces in the lake-villages of Cornish and even Baltic connections. Others were lowland agriculturalists, such as the Belgae who cleared valleys of woodlands and brought them under the plough. Others who did not possess this skill avoided what was to them unhealthy and unprofitable lowland, and kept to the high-ground areas such as the Mendips and Salisbury Plain.

These tribes probably had their separate gods and superstitions, but beside these there was something deeper. Up on Salisbury Plain some forty miles from Glastonbury, Stonehenge was already ancient. There at sunrise on midsummer day white-robed figures performed rituals - full of mystery to all except the Druids: "those who knew". The Druids did not build Stonehenge: it was well weather-beaten before they came on history's scene: but the man who designed Stonehenge must have known a surprising amount. (Chapter 5 may give us just an inkling of how much he knew.) The Druids who centuries later became his successors secretively handed down their knowledge within their band of initiates. To become a Druid took twenty years of exacting study. Literature, geometry, astronomy, astrology and other more esoteric subjects were in their curriculum. Some say the Druids had knowledge which our modern civilisation has lost.

Glastonbury (or Ynis-witrin as it was anciently called) seems to have been one of the centres of Druidism. In former times it had its grove of oaks at the foot of Stonedown (north-east of the Tor) where the Druids walked in procession, and an avenue of oaks led towards the Tor. Most of these ancient oaks were cut down about 1906 - one of them was eleven feet in diameter and had over two thousand season-rings - but at least two survive at the foot of Stonedown.

(When I first visited the two ancient oaks, a few years ago, I was "seen off" by a large and most unfriendly pig in a manner I shall not hurriedly forget! There is a legend that Glastonbury got its name from a northern Celt, Gleisting, whose prize pig escaped from her sty in the midlands, and he

pursued her all the way to Ynis-witrin. Seeing the fertility of the district, he settled there. But the vicious demeanour of the pig I encountered was in violent contrast to that of Gleisting's excellent porker. Definitely no relation!)

The comings of the Romans and of Christianity eventually led to the end of Druidism's reign, but two thousand years ago it was the chief religious and political power in the land.

The Druids taught a doctrine of life after death. Just what was believed appears to have varied considerably, but there seem to have been two main theories. On death the soul either migrated to an island, or it passed through a hill into the land of shades - the place the Greeks called Hades. There were quite a number of these magic islands and hills, and Glastonbury Tor was probably one; possibly the chief one.

But not only is the Tor an entrance to the underworld, it is also the abode of Gwyn ap Nudd, king of the fairies, lord of Annwn (Hades) and leader of the Wild Hunt - a band of supernatural horsemen (some say they are headless) riding the stormclouds. (Some have identified the Wild Hunt with the heavenly beings which are said to have appeared at the Battle of Mons and at other times of crisis but probably there is no connection.)

A certain demigod Avalloc (or Avallach) similarly seems to claim residence on the Tor and dominion over the underworld. Possibly he is Gwyn under another name.

Gwyn's glass fort guards the gate to the underworld. Glastonbury was known in far-off times as "Isle of Glass". Probably the name refers to the shimmering of the waters of the swamp, but it is one of those ethereal name-connections which flit ghost-like among the Glastonbury legends.

Gwyn lives in an invisible palace within the Tor to which he retires with his wild huntsmen. To this day there is a considerable body of people believing that

the Tor is either hollow or pierced by underground passages. Others take the more mundane view that this "magic hill-island" was just a prehistoric burial-place. It has never been properly excavated by archaeologists.

There is a story of how St. Collen, a Welsh hermit of the dark ages, was called to stand before King Gwyn at the top of the Tor. Collen somewhat unwillingly ascended the Tor, taking with him a quantity of holy water. At the summit he magically found himself before the underworld king in a beautiful castle. During their conversation Collen suddenly threw his holy water in all directions, whereupon Gwyn, his courtiers, and the castle all vanished, leaving the saint standing alone on top of the Tor! This tale (a folk-lore relic perhaps of an actual attempt at exorcism) shows us the existence of a superstition that the Tor in some mysterious way gave access to the underworld.

So, looking at the Glastonbury region of two thousand years ago, we have a picture of a vast swamp, with tribes in the early stages of civilisation - and rising from the swamp a strange conical hill which was regarded with superstitious awe. This is the background against which the next chapter unfolds.



Fig. 4. Tor.

CHAPTER 2

SAINT JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA - AND ASSOCIATED LEGENDS

JOSEPH

The date is A.D. 63 - or it may be even earlier, for one of the ancient authorities specifies that it was in the last year of Tiberius Caesar, which would be A.D. 37 - but probably A.D. 63 is the correct date. The place is Wearyall Hill about a mile south-west of what is today Glastonbury. Joseph of Arimathaea has just arrived there with eleven companions.

Joseph is a figure about whom we know little, and this suggests that there may be some truth in the legend, for anyone wishing to concoct a tale out of nothing would surely have chosen a better-known figure. In the Bible, each of the four Gospels mentions him just once - as the man who, after the Crucifixion, begged Christ's body from Pontius Pilate, and placed it in a tomb. Matthew's Gospel tells us he was a rich man. Luke describes him as a counsellor who had not consented to what the authorities had done to Christ. John describes him as "a disciple ... secretly for fear of the Jews".

There is a suggestion that he was Christ's uncle. The chief evidence for this is that Pilate was willing to give him the body at all. From the legal point of view, Christ had been condemned as a criminal, and there was a place outside the city for the burial of such persons. To give the body to a stranger would be inviting trouble for both Pilate and the stranger. But if Joseph was a relative the position would be quite different: both Roman and Jewish law saw it as the relatives' duty to dispose of the bodies of their kinsmen, irrespective of how death had occurred. On this basis, Pilate would presumably be quite willing to hand the body over to a relative.

Now here is the outline of the legend:- Philip the Apostle sent Joseph of Arimathaea to Britain with eleven companions, to preach the Gospel of Christ and His resurrection. The twelve men eventually reached Wearyall Hill. It is not clear whether they landed here or whether they landed elsewhere and walked to this spot from the direction of the town of Street, crossing the marsh at Pomparles, which means Dangerous Bridge. (See fig. 3.) The legend has it that they were all weary - hence the name of the hill - and stopped to rest. Joseph thrust his staff into the ground as he was kneeling to pray - and the staff immediately took root and budded, to become the Glastonbury Holy Thorn. The thorn blossomed on Christmas Day each year.

King Arviragus, ruler of the district not yet under the Roman thumb, listened respectfully to the Gospel; and though he refused to submit to baptism himself, he invited the twelve to stay in his kingdom and preach to his people, and to have the Tor as their own land.

Around the foot of the Tor the twelve lived as hermits. A never-failing spring provided them with water. (This would be the Chalice Spring.) They built a wattle church in obedience to the command of the angel Gabriel who appeared to them. It seems this wattle church was at some distance from the Tor and its site is now occupied by the chapel sometimes known as St. Mary's and sometimes as St. Joseph's chapel (though it is in fact dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary) in the abbey ruins. At that time the persecuted Christians in Rome were still worshipping in the catacombs underground, and this little wattle church is therefore generally recognised as the first above-ground Christian church in the world. The story goes on to tell us that Christ personally dedicated it to His mother in some miraculous way.

King Arviragus died, but his successors, his son Coillus and grandson Marius, gave further land to the hermits: land which became known as the Glaston Twelve Hides.

In due course Joseph died and was buried near the southern corner of the wattle church, though an alternative tradition says he was buried at Montacute, about fourteen miles south. In favour of the Glastonbury version the fifth-century record (if genuine, which cannot be proved) of the prophecy of the bard Melkin is our authority.

As we look for details we run into difficulties with our authority: Melkin's bad Latin in his prophecy is untranslatable. He speaks of "*bifurcata linea*", which may mean that the tomb was on a bifurcated (i.e. divided in two) line - such as a junction between two paths - or may equally well mean Joseph was buried wearing a bifurcated shirt. "*Linea*" can mean a line or a linen shirt. This is not the only difficulty with this passage, as we shall see later.

The bard's prophecy goes on to say that the tomb shall be found entire in days to come and shall be open to all the world.

In 1662 one John Ray recorded that on 22nd. June of that year he saw Joseph of Arimathaea's tomb at the abbey. This was during the troubles of the Reformation. For a time the Puritans were in power. A nonconformist Minister was put in charge of Glastonbury parish church, and it was in 1662 that he was turned out and replaced by a man of different beliefs. The result was a schism, and the chapel which is now the United Reformed church in the High Street was founded.

A fanatical Puritan cut down the Holy Thorn. Statues were being beheaded or destroyed. (Several examples can be seen on the tower at the top of the Tor.) What might such men do to the revered Joseph's tomb? The tomb must be removed for its own protection. One night therefore, the tomb disappeared.

The safest place to hide a valuable and very heavy tomb is among a lot of other tombs in a graveyard, and that is how a tomb marked J A came to appear in the

churchyard of the Glastonbury parish church. It was said to be John Allen's tomb. There it remained until 1928 when it was taken into the church, where it can be seen today. Some still believe it is the tomb of Mr. Allen. But it bears marks of being a tomb which at some time was moved, and moved hastily. Some of the stonework was badly broken in the move. The remains it once contained have long since vanished, but the tomb is entire as Melkin foretold, and is open for all to see, with a glass top. - Or rather, it was open: the last time I saw it the glass top had been removed and the tomb had been given what I considered a particularly ugly and ill-made solid top.

There are many colourful variations and additions to the Joseph story. In one version Joseph with Martha, Mary, Lazarus and others are put into a boat without sails oars or rudder which miraculously travels almost the whole length of the Mediterranean to Marseilles, where the party comes ashore and crosses into Britain, following no doubt the ancient trade-route up the valley of the River Rhone. Legends of Joseph are still to be found along this route.

In another version 150 persons crossed the sea on a shirt! The shirt belonged to Josephes, son of Joseph, and the mention of its miraculous properties is interesting in view of Josephes' connection with that other strangely-confused legend of this time, the legend of the Holy Grail. The Grail legend is very much interwoven with the stories of King Arthur and his knights, and will be considered in chapter 4 in which they feature.

When Joseph and his companions had all departed this life their land lay abandoned.

Almost a century later (about A.D. 160 or 170) tradition has it that two further missionaries, Faganus and Deruvianus, came to the place and restored the wattle church which they found. It is said they added a stone church dedicated to Christ and to Sts. Peter and Paul, and built the original St. Michael's church

on top of the Tor. The missionaries selected twelve of their converts to take up residence on the twelve spots formerly occupied by Joseph and his companions, and as death called home these new hermits one by one, successors were appointed, so that the cells remained occupied. From these small beginnings the great Glastonbury abbey sprang.

JESUS

The other chief legend connected with Joseph of Arimathaea is in some ways the most fascinating of all. It says that when Jesus Christ was a young man and had not yet started His ministry, He accompanied Joseph on his trading voyages to Britain and lived for a time at Glastonbury. Jesus built Himself a wattle hut in Glastonbury and spent His time there in contemplation and in preparation for His great work.

The truth of the legend cannot be proved. But is it likely or even possible? There is some circumstantial evidence: let us see what we can make of it.

I am not being impartial here; I am trying to summarise the case which exists *in favour of* the legend. But it is quite a good case.

First, there was undoubtedly trade between south-west Britain and the Mediterranean. The tin mines of Cornwall supplied Rome, and the mines of Mendip were the chief source of the world's supply of lead in those days. I understand the British Museum has two exhibits of Romano-British lead, one dated A.D. 49 and bearing the name of Britannicus, son of the Emperor Claudius; the other dated A.D. 60 and inscribed as being the property of the Emperor Nero. Both exhibits are Mendip lead.

Secondly, there is an ancient tradition that Joseph was in the tin trade. This tradition seems to have survived more or less independently in such diverse spots as Gaul, western Ireland, Gloucester, north London and the Cornish tin-mining region. Matthew's

Gospel tells us Joseph was rich.

Thirdly, we have already seen that there is at least the reasonable possibility that Joseph was Jesus' uncle. If this is correct, then it is not unreasonable to suppose that Jesus might have accompanied Joseph on his trading voyages.

Fourthly, from the age of twelve to the start of His ministry (at about the age of thirty) the Bible has not a word on where Jesus was or what He was doing. This does not prove anything at all, but it leads us to think that for a number of years maybe Jesus was absent from His native land.

Fifthly, we have the "Jesus-was-here" traditions which have lingered on in Somerset and Cornwall. (I know of no such traditions in Devon, which is reasonable because Joseph's destinations would have been in either the tin area of Cornwall or the lead region of Somerset: he would not have landed in Devon.) These traditions are very faint and scrappy, yet they are there. An ancient well in Cornwall at the mouth of the River Camel is known as Jesus Well. Independently there has survived the story of His stay at Glastonbury. Eight miles north of Glastonbury in the Mendip lead country is the tiny village of Priddy where a story of a visit by Christ survives. There is an old Mendip saying: "as sure as our Lord was at Priddy".

Sixthly, it is said that there is a tradition in the region of the Sea of Galilee that Christ visited Britain as a shipwright (carpenter) aboard a trading ship from Tyre, and that He was storm-bound on the shores of the West of England throughout the winter.

Seventhly, it has been suggested (though I do not like the idea myself) that a reason for the Lord to visit Glastonbury was not only to enjoy the peace of the area but also because it was a Druid centre. Accounts of Druidism vary immensely. At its best it is represented as teaching a Trinity and a life after death; and the mistletoe which was to the Druids a

special plant is said to have been especially associated in their teachings with a coming saviour named Yesu, known as the "All Heal". But there are other accounts of Druidism which paint a gruesome picture of secret signs and human sacrifices.

Eighthly, mention must be made of a letter from St. Augustine to Pope Gregory. Augustine came to Britain believing, apparently, that the whole country was pagan. He found at Glastonbury a thriving and old-established Church. He then wrote to Pope Gregory in these terms: "In the western confines of Britain there is a certain royal island ... in it the first neophytes of Catholic Law, God beforehand acquainting them, found a church constructed by no human art but divinely constructed, for the salvation of His people. The Almighty has made it manifest ... that He continues to watch over it".

This is confusing. The reference definitely seems to be to a divinely constructed building. Does it mean the wattle hut which Christ is said to have constructed with His own divine hands while He was at Glastonbury? Or has a misunderstanding crept in, so that the building referred to is the wattle church built after Christ's death resurrection and ascension, by Joseph and his followers, which seems to have been divinely dedicated in some miraculous way? We cannot tell. We must remember that however ancient Augustine may seem to us, the wattle church was over five hundred years old when he saw it - a remarkable age for a structure of such material - and facts handed down orally from generation to generation are very prone to change. The wattle church is considered in the next section of this chapter, but let us here note that Augustine believed that the Glastonbury Christian community was of very ancient foundation, though whether he believed the building to have been built by Christ Himself (and if so, whether that was true of *this* building) is not clear.

To sum up:- I have set out above an eight-point submission of the case in favour of belief in the

story that Jesus Christ came to Glastonbury. Basically the case is that there was regular trade between Somerset and the Mediterranean, Joseph of Arimathaea was one of the traders, and his nephew Jesus accompanied him on his trading voyages. Admittedly the evidence is uncertain and circumstantial: nevertheless it exists despite the passing of over nineteen centuries. It comes from far-scattered sources yet builds up into a fairly coherent story. It is not unreasonable to say, "There may be something in it".

It is this story which William Blake had in mind when he wrote his famous hymn:

"And did those feet in ancient times
Walk upon England's mountains green ..."

THE WATTLE CHURCH

We have seen in this chapter how both Joseph and Christ are said to have erected a wattle building, and in our consideration of Augustine's letter to Pope Gregory we could not tell whether his reference was to a building erected by Christ Himself, or to a different one. But whichever is meant, we are left with the fact that there was a very ancient and very revered building at Glastonbury - and it is indeed a fact: in the year 633 it was covered over with boards and lead to preserve it, royal charters were signed within its hallowed area in 725 and (by King Canute) in 1032, and it was finally destroyed by fire - together with almost the whole of the abbey - on 25th. May 1184.

A new chapel was immediately erected on the same spot and was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin on 11th. June 1186. This St. Mary's chapel (commonly known as St. Joseph's chapel though strictly only the crypt beneath it is St. Joseph's chapel) was regarded as a spot of particular reverence - and even after the dissolution of the monastery in the sixteenth century the builders who used the abbey ruins as a source of building stone treated this chapel with respect - thus it is today the best-preserved part of all the

ecclesiastical buildings of the abbey. When the chapel was extended in mediaeval times a pillar bearing an inscribed brass plate was erected, so that the original size, based apparently on the size of the wattle church, should not be forgotten. (More on this matter appears in chapter 5.) The brass plate has been lost since the seventeenth century, but a facsimile print of it exists, made by Sir Henry Spelman prior to 1639, and describes the chapel as having a length of sixty feet and a breadth of twenty-six feet, the centre of the pillar being forty-eight feet north of the middle point of the original east wall. The pillar was destroyed at the time of the Reformation but its foundations were uncovered in 1921.

We shall consider the wattle church again, from a different viewpoint, in chapter 5.

THE THORN

The thorn - famous for its flowering at Christmas - has legends of its own. It is said that when Joseph of Arimathaea began to preach the good news of Jesus Christ at Glastonbury he met opposition which varied from common heckling to stone-throwing. Undaunted he persevered, but one Christmas Day on Wearyall Hill, when he spoke of the King of kings as being born humbly in a stable and laid in a manger, the crowd shouted derisively for a sign. Then Joseph heard a voice tell him to thrust his dry staff into the ground. He did so, and *within a few minutes* it put out branches, budded, and burst into blossom. The people, seeing the sign, accepted the message.

Other versions of this legend say he thrust his staff into the ground to claim the land, or so that he could kneel to pray.

Another legend says that when Joseph laid Jesus in his tomb after the Crucifixion, Joseph took the crown of thorns from the Saviour's head and planted the twigs of which it was made. One of them grew

into a tree and Joseph's staff was cut from this tree.

The original thorn on Wearyall Hill was a victim of Puritan zeal at the Reformation - though the story goes that one of the Puritans who attacked it was wounded in the leg by his own axe and was struck in the eye by a splinter from the tree. The original tree had two main branches. One was severed, the other was almost cut through and the remains were left lying prone, but the tree survived in this condition for about another thirty years, by which time numerous cuttings had been grown from it. The ones in the abbey grounds and St. John's churchyard are well known, and there are several others in and around Glastonbury. It rarely grows outside the Glastonbury district.

There is on Wearyall Hill a stone slab on which was carved (though now barely legible) "J.A. Anno D. XXXI". This slab, placed there by a certain Jonathan Clark about the end of the eighteenth century, is believed to mark the spot where the original tree stood. (The date A.D. 31 is wrong; but thirty-one years after the resurrection would bring us close to A.D. 63, the date with which this chapter started.)

Botanically, Rev. L.S.Lewis describes the species as a Levantine thorn, while Mr. Geoffrey Ashe in his book "King Arthur's Avalon" says it is a freak hawthorn or applewort, *Crataegus oxyacantha*. It cannot be struck but can be budded. There is no fruit, but it blossoms in May and also on old Christmas Day.

In 1752 the calendar was changed by eleven days to bring Britain into line with Europe (ooh!) where the calendar of Pope Gregory XIII was in general use. At Christmas, crowds gathered to see what the trees would do. To the delight of some and chagrin of others, the trees refused to follow the Papal calendar, and blossomed on 5th. January - a practice which they continue to this day. Since 1929, gifts of the January blossom have been sent to the reigning Monarch.

THE VIRGIN MARY

Before we leave the series of legends in which Joseph figures, there are two other stories for us to consider. The first concerns the Virgin Mary. The Roman Catholic church states dogmatically her bodily assumption - in other words at the end of her life she left this world bodily, and so no burial place or mortal remains of her can be found. But ancient times have handed down a different story.

St. Ann the mother of the Blessed Virgin was born in Cornwall, of royal blood. Cruelly treated by her husband, she fled, though expecting a child, and boarded a ship. Thus she travelled to the Holy Land and reached Nazareth, where her child, Mary, was born. Fifteen years later Mary was married to a local carpenter. Ann then returned to Cornwall where Jesus came several times to visit her.

After the events of Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Whit Sunday, the infant Christian Church grew. Soon persecution caused many believers to flee. At this time Joseph of Arimathaea brought the Virgin Mary to Britain. She lived some fifteen years at Glastonbury, until her death, and was buried at the wattle church.

We run into difficulties here. This story seems particularly faint and fragmentary: the rather definite-sounding account which I have just related has foundations which seem little more than shadows. Furthermore, as related here the events do not tally with the date A.D. 63 which we have seen as the likeliest date of Joseph's arrival at Glastonbury - though it would tally with the earlier suggested date of A.D. 37.

Why should we believe that the Virgin Mary is buried at Glastonbury? I will make four submissions, but none of them is anywhere near conclusive.

First, the old wattle church was dedicated to her. Dedications to Mary were not normal until the twelfth century: in the early days dedications were usually to

the Holy Trinity, or to St. Michael, or to some local saint buried there. The dedication to Mary would of course be quite reasonable if she were buried there.

Secondly there is documentary evidence - but here we are in trouble again with that man Melkin and his bad Latin. His account of the burial of Joseph says he was buried in a bifurcated line (or shirt!) by the wattle church "*super potentem adorandam virginem*". This is usually taken to mean that the church was "for the adoring of the mighty Virgin", but Rev.L.S.Lewis in his "St. Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury" takes the word "*super*" more literally, translating it that Joseph was buried in a bifurcated line "*above the mighty adorable Virgin*".

Thirdly I read that a Mrs. Cottrell of Penwerris, Cornwall, who was educated at a French convent, said that she had been told by the sisters that St. Joseph of Arimathea brought the Blessed Virgin to Britain, and that she died there - an astonishing statement to come from modern Roman Catholics. Again my source is Rev.L.S.Lewis' book.

Talking of sources it is not out of place at this point to say a word to avoid confusion between the various Rev. Lewises. The late Rev.L.S.Lewis mentioned above was at one time Vicar of Glastonbury. Though I have obtained most of the information on the Virgin Mary legend from his above-mentioned book, he acknowledges that he heard the point concerning Mrs. Cottrell from his namesake Rev.H.A.Lewis, author of "Christ in Cornwall". They should both be distinguished from the well-known writer Professor C.S.Lewis, author of "The Screwtape Letters" and numerous other works. A word of warning is also needed: some feel that Rev.L.S. Lewis, in his undoubtedly-sincere enthusiasm for the Glastonbury stories, draws more conclusions than the evidence warrants. Geoffrey Ashe says of him in "King Arthur's Avalon": "He spoiled both (his) books by an utter inability or unwillingness to criticise evidence ... he is capable of quoting a document with name, date, and an air of scholarship, but with no hint whatever

that all scholars regard the document as a forgery".

To return to the case for Mary at Glastonbury. Our fourth submission concerns Jehoshaphat and comes from a group of minor, very indefinite points (mostly based on the meanings of ancient names) the rest of which are not further mentioned here.

Melkin refers to Joseph as being in Jehoshaphat, by which he seems to mean Glastonbury. This reference is then tied in with a fourth-century Gnostic legend (condemned by the Church as heresy) as to the burial of Mary in Jehoshaphat which is the valley (location unspecified) mentioned by the prophet Joel in a passage which can be interpreted as an Old Testament reference to Christ's Second Coming. (Do you see the point? The Gnostics said Mary was buried in Jehoshaphat, and Melkin infers that Jehoshaphat is Glastonbury.) But the Gnostic legend then goes on to speak of Mary's soul and body being re-united and entrusted to angels to carry to heaven!

Thus our evidence seems to be:-

1. a church dedication which could have various explanations,
2. one word in an untranslatable manuscript,
3. a story heard in a French convent many years ago, and
4. a Gnostic heresy which ends with Mary's assumption anyway.

Not a particularly strong case.

CARACTACUS AND CO.

Now we come to the last legend in this group. I preface it with a caution: I got it from Rev.L.S.Lewis.

There is certain ancient documentary evidence to show that King Lear (yes, he existed!) who was brought up at the Court of the Roman Emperor Augustus, married Penardin, daughter of one Anna. Anna was daughter of Joseph of Arimathaea and therefore cousin of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Lear and Penardin had a grandson Caractacus who was King of the Britons in the first century A.D. - thus the holy family was related to the ancient British royal family. (This could possibly explain why in A.D. 63 Joseph was so readily granted land by the unconverted King Arviragus: such a grant would be quite reasonable if Arviragus knew Joseph as a kinsman as well as as a regular trader.)

Bran, son of Lear and father of Caractacus, was an arch-druid who was converted in Rome and returned to Britain apparently as a missionary. Caractacus too was converted while in Rome.

Caractacus had a daughter Gladys (or Claudia) who married Rufus Pudens. Claudia's brother was Linus, who became Bishop of Rome in A.D. 69 and was martyred in A.D. 90. St. Paul mentions Pudens, Linus and Claudia by name in his second letter to Timothy (*2 Timothy 4, 21*). Researchers of Paul's friendship with this family find suggestions that St. Simon the Zealot and St. Paul (and just possibly St. Peter) may have visited Britain.

Good King Lucius (great-grandson of Caractacus) married Gladys (great-granddaughter of Arviragus):- such diverse personages as the Emperor Constantine (the first Christian Roman Emperor) and Glastonbury's own King Arthur are shown to have been possibly descended from this marriage. King Coel (Old King Cole) who is said to be buried at Glastonbury, is listed as another of Lucius' descendants.

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To conclude: we have seen in this chapter a group of stories which link together. They concern chiefly Joseph, Jesus, the wattle church, the Grail (which we have not yet investigated) and the Virgin Mary. None can be ruled out as impossible, but some are supported by more evidence than others. It has not been my intention to go beyond an outline of the

evidence available: other writers have already looked into this in much detail.

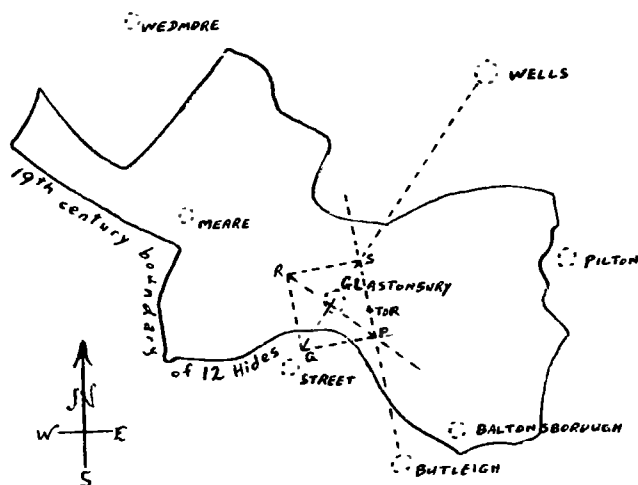


Fig. 5. The Extent of the Glaston Twelve Hides in the Nineteenth Century.

(The original Twelve Hides are believed to have been 1,440 acres, which would have been a piece of land the size of the square P-Q-R-S in the above diagram. A theory concerning this square appears on page 140.)

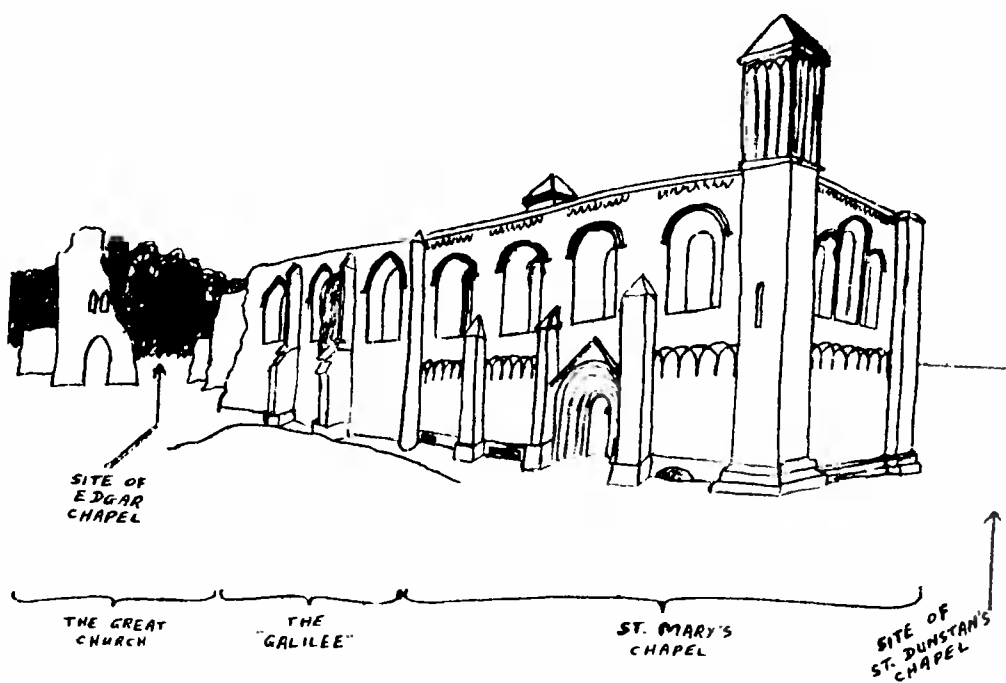


Fig. 6. The Abbey.

CHAPTER 3

THE ABBEY - AND THE MOORS

This chapter tells the story of how Glastonbury came to have a very large abbey standing in ruins right in the middle of the town.

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We saw in chapter 2 how Glastonbury abbey was founded with a wattle building and twelve hermits. From this small beginning grew one of the largest religious communities of Anglo-Saxon England.

Unlike some other similar communities, it was never overrun and destroyed by heathen raiders. Christianity in some form or other has existed continuously in Glastonbury from the days of Faganus and Deruvianus (about A.D. 160 or 170 - we met them on page 18) or maybe even from the days of Joseph of Arimathaea, to the present day.

The pagan Romans advanced into Somerset, almost to within sight of the Tor, but then they stopped. The Fosse Way (see fig. 2) marks the approximate limit of their advance. The Romans traded with the western Celts (the Britons) but never overran them.

In the sixth century when after the departure of the Romans from our shores most of England was overrun by pagan tribes - Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and so forth - the west-country Celts led by Arthur put up a fierce resistance; and Glastonbury abbey remained a centre of learning and of Christianity - a light in a dark age when most other such lights were extinguished.

In the seventh century the Celtic resistance was broken down and the invading Anglo-Saxons spread over Somerset. But by this time St. Augustine (who landed in Kent in 597) had done his good work; when the conquerors reached Glastonbury they were no longer pagan tribes bent on slaughter of all Christians: they were at least to some extent Christianised.

The list of notable saints having connections with Glastonbury's abbey is long and wonderful. To name just some of them:- St. Patrick of Ireland was there in 439 and is reputed to have been buried there; in 530 St. David of Wales was there; and sometime in the sixth century so was St. Columba who founded the abbey on the island of Iona off western Scotland. See how Ireland Wales and Scotland all had Glastonbury connections. St. Augustine visited Glastonbury about the year 597.

St. Dunstan was abbot of Glastonbury from about 943 to 988, combining this office with that of archbishop of Canterbury which he held from 961 to 988.

Kings came there too: King Arthur for one, but his story must wait until the next chapter. King Ine, a notable benefactor of the abbey who appears again later in this chapter, signed a charter for the abbey in the old wattle church in 725. King Canute, too, signed a charter in the wattle church, in 1032. King Henry II financed the rebuilding of the abbey after the disastrous fire of 1184. Other royal visitors have included Edward I, Edward III, and the Black Prince.

King Henry VIII paid the abbey attentions of a different sort in 1539, as we shall see.

The very ancient foundation of the Celtic Church at Glastonbury is the basis of the English Church's claim to be senior to (i.e. more old-established than) the Churches of France, Spain, and certain other lands. This claim was defended (after its authenticity had been questioned) at the international councils held in Pisa (1409) Constance (1417) Sienna (1424) and Basle (1434). The abbot of Glastonbury, Nicholas Frome, was one of the English Church's delegates to the Basle council.

THE EARLY BUILDINGS

Faganus and Deruvianus on their arrival in the latter part of the second century found the wattle church (St. Mary's) standing. They added a stone one which they dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul; and also built, on the Tor, a church dedicated to St. Michael. In A.D. 439 St. Patrick repaired the wattle church and the one on the Tor.

In 530, St. David wanted to re-dedicate the wattle church but was divinely warned not to do so - so instead he extended it and erected a pillar to indicate the join between the old and the new. (Possibly this extension joined the wattle church to the stone church of Faganus and Deruvianus, and was the original "galilee", forerunner of the "galilee" which today joins St. Mary's chapel to the ruins of the great main church of the abbey.) In 633 the wattle church was protected with a covering of wood and lead.

(Note: ancient records vary; the account by William of Malmesbury in the twelfth century differs from the above in some respects.)

THE EARLY FAITH

In the early centuries, the community of Christian hermits at Glastonbury grew quickly. By the beginning of the sixth century it was one of the three Perpetual Choirs of Britain (Llan Iltyd Fawr in Glamorgan and Ambresbury - Amesbury? - near Salisbury being the others) with a choir alleged to be of 2,400 saints: 100 for each hour of the day and night.

What was the power that gathered and inspired such a community?

At first, at any rate, it was not just a message of "Love thy neighbour and do good". (Communities built on that foundation seem all too often to end in strife.) On the contrary it was a message that we cannot sufficiently do good, and need to rely on a Saviour who can deal with

this fault which we cannot remedy for ourselves.

"All have sinned", wrote St. Paul, who (according to one legend) may have visited Britain. (Romans 3, 23)

"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out", St. Peter (another alleged visitor to our shores) proclaimed. (Acts 3, 19)

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved", cried Paul. (Acts 16, 31)

The Glastonbury hermits and the early saints who came to visit or to join with them were men who had taken this deliberate step of believing in Christ - repenting and being converted as Peter had said. Such men were prepared to suffer for their faith. Some suffered martyrdom. This is not a "holier than thou" doctrine. Its equivalent in commercial terms is Bankruptcy: the new recruit comes to God knowing and frankly admitting that he cannot square the account he owes to the Almighty. But Christ, if we rely on Him, is our substitute, bearing the divine judgment which otherwise would fall on us.

When such as these went forth to preach, they went in true New Testament style: not answerable to any hierarchy or society, but going as men with a message in their hearts of the way back to God, and a desire from the Holy Spirit to share the secret of their new life with their fellow-men. There are still such men (and women) today, but many who today call themselves Christians know nothing of the change which comes from true belief in Christ.

Not all who named the name of Christ in the early days had this wondrous faith. Prominent among the heresies was that of the Briton Pelagius, who taught that all that is necessary is that a man should do his best, in obedience to Christ's moral teaching contained in the Sermon on the Mount. A large number of churches in Britain seem to preach just this today. Note the contrast with St. Paul's words: "By grace

(i.e. by an undeserved favour) you are saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not through works ..." though Paul goes on to say in this passage (*Ephesians 2, 8-10*) that the *result* of this saving faith is that Christians will do good works.

Until the coming of St. Augustine at the end of the sixth century, the Celtic Glastonbury community had had little or no contact for a very long time with the main body of Christendom in which the Bishop of Rome - later to be known as Pope - had become a figure of increasing power.

Celtic Christianity was probably mainly non-heretical but a relationship can apparently be shown between it and Catharism (a part of the family of the Albigensian heresy) - the relationship being through King Arthur and the Holy Grail. Thus the stories twine together still further. Some maintain that the Christianity which Augustine brought was less pure than that which Glastonbury already had - and that Augustine pressed upon the Celts a religion crowded with the mandates and traditions of men, instead of letting them continue in the purer doctrines they received long before.

As a result there was strife after a time between the Celtic and Roman Churches, and at the council of Whitby in 664 the Roman Church became the victor. Not a great deal is known today about the details of the doctrines and practices of the old Celtic Church, although books on the subject do appear on the bookstall at the entrance to the Glastonbury abbey ruins.

THE CHANGE TO BENEDICTINE RULE

The community did not change its beliefs and practices overnight, but gradually over the years - the decades - the centuries - the picture altered greatly.

In 708 King Ine pulled down the ruined stone buildings (Faganus' and Deruvianus' church, presumably) and erected a

new church dedicated like its predecessor to Sts. Peter and Paul. Ine was a devout man - he later renounced his kingship and spent the last part of his life as a monk in Rome - but he was very much influenced by the Benedictine monastic order. No longer do we see a loosely-organised community of believers at Glastonbury in their individual hermitages. Instead there is a monastery organised to some extent at least in the Benedictine manner.

In 878 the Danes practically destroyed the monastery. The flame of faith flickered low - it nearly went out. The Danes had ravaged the coastal settlements, and had then set out to conquer the whole land. The north, the east, and London were in their hands.

England's man for this desperate hour was King Alfred and as he sat at Athelney (about twelve miles south-west of Glastonbury - an island in the marshes at that time) he had more important things to do than to watch the cakes for which he seems to have become chiefly famous. Alfred founded the British navy and won some decisive battles against the invaders. The reputed site of one of his victories, close to the Somerset-Wilts boundary about fifteen miles east of Glastonbury, is marked by King Alfred's tower, 160 feet in height, which is visible (with binoculars) from the top of Glastonbury Tor.

At Glastonbury, the flame had burnt so low that Alfred did not rebuild the abbey. Instead, he established a new one at Athelney - an abbey of which scarcely a trace remains today. At Glastonbury for the next few years a handful of poor clerks laboured to give local children the bare bones of an education and to teach them something of their duty to God. One of the local children, born probably at Baltonsborough (four miles south-east of Glastonbury) was called Dunstan.

As a young man, this Dunstan became a favourite of the king (Athelstan) on account of his musical

ability. Falling from favour as a result of some intrigue against him, he fled the court and sought refuge with the Bishop of Winchester, who was a relative of his. The Bishop persuaded him to go abroad, to a Benedictine monastery, and when in due course he returned to England he was filled with enthusiasm for the Benedictine way. Returning to Glastonbury, he built himself a cell there said to have been only five feet long by two feet six inches wide, and commenced to live the life of a hermit.

Legend tells us that as a metal-work craftsman Dunstan had his own forge and anvil in his cell. (Presumably this was a larger cell than the one above-mentioned!) One day he was visited there by a beautiful woman who with sweet allurements tried to entice him away from his vow of celibacy. Recognising her as the Devil in disguise, Dunstan snatched up his long fire-tongs, with which he seized her by the nose - whereupon the Devil dropped his disguise and fled, howling dismally.

Clearly Satan could not let matters rest thus. He came to Dunstan again - in pantomime-devil shape with long tail and cloven hoof this time - and offered Dunstan a large bribe if he would shoe his cloven hoof. Refusing the bribe, Dunstan proceeded to fasten the Devil to the wall and then went to work with red-hot tools until the Devil screamed for mercy. Dunstan let him go on the condition that he would never again enter any building which bore a horseshoe on its door.

And that pleasant fairy-tale is said to be the reason why horseshoes are sometimes placed upon doors.

King Athelstan was succeeded by his brother Edmund, and Dunstan returned to court. There was another intrigue: he departed again - but not for long. King Edmund was hunting on the Mendips when he and his horse nearly - very nearly - plunged over the edge of Cheddar Gorge. Pulling up on the very brink of the 400ft. drop, a pale and shaken Edmund determined to attend to one or two matters which were weighing on his conscience. Dunstan's banishment from court was one of these, and as a result he not only

restored Dunstan to favour; he appointed him abbot of Glastonbury and committed to him the task of rebuilding the ruined monastery at the king's expense and reviving the monastic life there.

Edmund was succeeded by the equally enthusiastic Eadred in 946, but in 955 Eadred died and was succeeded by Edwy.

At the coronation ceremony, King Edwy became bored with the proceedings and left the banquet early. Dunstan went to him to persuade him to return. The king did not wish to oblige. So Dunstan picked up the crown from the floor where Edwy had let it fall, thrust it onto the king's head, and took the king by the shoulders - and within a few moments the surprised monarch found himself back in the banqueting-hall.

King Edwy did not take kindly to this treatment, and soon his soldiers were seeking Dunstan, who fled again - this time to Flanders, where most unexpectedly he seems to have had a hand in spreading the Holy Grail legend in respect of which we shall meet him again in chapter 4.

Edwy had numerous enemies - which is not surprising when one considers his nature - and had to submit to the kingdom being divided between him and his brother Edgar. Edgar promptly brought Dunstan back from Flanders and made him Bishop of Worcester. After Edwy's early death Edgar was king of the whole kingdom, and soon (961) Dunstan was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.

Dunstan retained his position as abbot of Glastonbury in addition to being Archbishop, until his death in 988. Under his guidance the abbey prospered, new buildings were erected, many new members were added to the community. He was a most powerful figure: on one occasion he rebuked the Pope, on another he imposed a severe penance on King Edgar, including a command that the king should not wear his crown for seven years. The king carried out the penance to the full, and at the end of the seven years Dunstan placed the crown again on Edgar's head.

One of Dunstan's works in Glastonbury was the raising of the level of the graveyard. The abbey cemetery was full, as interments of monks, saints and great men had been taking place there for centuries. To make room for more burials without disturbing the bodies that already lay there, Dunstan brought a large quantity of soil and covered the graveyard to a depth of several feet.

Numerous kings are buried at Glastonbury, including Edmund, who made Dunstan abbot, and Edgar, who made him archbishop of Canterbury.

Glastonbury abbey had probably been to some extent influenced by the Benedictine order ever since the time of King Ine, but whether this is the case or not, it was fully embraced into the Benedictine rule under Dunstan. Probably it was the first Benedictine abbey in England. The era of the Celtic Church's influence had finally come to an end: the new era, in which during the next five hundred years the abbey was to be one of England's foremost religious houses, with all the pomp and splendour - and superstition - of mediaevalism, had begun.

To me, the ruins of the great church are a reminder of the middle ages, while the older St. Mary's chapel reminds me of the earlier, simpler and purer faith which was the source of the early Christians' power.

THE COMING OF THE NORMANS

A century after Dunstan's time the Norman Conquest resulted in a Norman abbot, Thurstan, being put in charge of the abbey.

This Thurstan was a somewhat tactless man who did not well understand the monks in his charge. A furious dispute arose between him and the monks about which form of chant should be used for the abbey services (!) and the abbot ordered the Norman soldiery to bring the monks to heel. The monks fled into the great abbey church. The soldiers followed, drew their bows, and fired on the monks. One monk was slain with a spear as he clung to the altar.

Another held a crucifix in front of himself for defence.

Suddenly the soldiers stopped, gazing in horror at the arrow which stuck quivering in the crucifix. Then they turned and ran, no doubt expecting that the wrath of God would fall upon them at any moment. Following this outrage, the king removed Thurstan from his post and sent him back to Normandy in disgrace.

The abbey continued to grow both in power and prosperity. Thurstan's successor Herlewin (abbot 1101-20) demolished the abbey church and built a new one. Further magnificent additions were made under abbot Henry de Blois, the brother of King Stephen, who was in charge of the abbey from 1126 to 1171, a period of 45 years.

On St. Urban's day (25th. May) 1184 a great fire devastated the abbey. The new buildings including the great church and the monks' living quarters were almost completely gutted. The old wattle church was burnt down. And most of the relics of holy men of old which the monks treasured were destroyed. The loss of the relics which had brought so many pilgrims to pay homage - and money - was perhaps the greatest blow of all.

AFTER THE FIRE

At this time the abbey was wealthy, but not so wealthy that it could undertake so extensive a building programme as was now necessary. King Henry II came to the rescue and in two years a new St. Mary's chapel was built on the site of the old wattle church. This chapel, consecrated in 1186, is the beautiful Norman building now known as St. Mary's or as St. Joseph's chapel, which forms one of the chief features of the ruins today.

Royal help did not continue long, for in 1189 Henry died, and his successor Richard I was not interested in financing the rebuilding operations. The monks found themselves woefully short of money, and rebuilding continued slowly over more than a century. A further setback occurred in the form of an earthquake which

damaged the town and abbey in the late thirteenth century.

While the rebuilding was in progress occasional odd things happened which the more cynical of readers may be inclined to regard wholly or partly as money-making publicity gimmicks. Let us glance at three such occurrences.

One of these was the discovery of the relics of King Arthur. In 1190, the monks dug on the reputed site of Arthur's grave. The skeleton of a very large man, accompanied by the skeleton of a woman - surely this must be Arthur and his queen Guinevere - were found together as we shall see in chapter 4, at a depth of sixteen feet, this being a reasonable depth when we remember that Dunstan had added a second tier to the graveyard about two hundred years previously. The bones were shown to a favoured few, and then were re-interred in a shrine before the high altar of the partly-built new abbey church. The pilgrims came, convinced now that Glastonbury was indeed King Arthur's Avalon.

A second source of publicity for the abbey concerned the Holy Grail. Around the turn of that century various poetry and prose versions of the Arthurian and Holy Grail legends appeared. One of these was an anonymous Norman-French manuscript known as "Perlesvaus" which has now been rendered into a quaint form of English by the Rev. Sebastian Evans and is usually available, under the name "The High History of the Holy Graal" at the abbey bookstall. This peculiar book, which will be examined further at the end of chapter 5, tells of King Arthur and his Christian knights conquering enchanted castles, experiencing all sorts of strange adventures, and seeking the Holy Grail. It contains a lot of mysterious references which seem to relate to identifiable spots in the Glastonbury neighbourhood, which may well have been intended to "advertise" the town and the abbey after the fire.

And thirdly there was the scandalous affair of St. Dunstan's bones. At the time of the fire this had already been going on for more than a century, but the

fire gave it new importance. At the time of Dunstan's death in 988 Glastonbury abbey had many relics of numerous saints, but it did not receive Dunstan's mortal remains; they were interred at Canterbury. After Canterbury was sacked by the Danes in 1011 the holy buildings there became waste and desolate. While they were in this sad state, a party of Glastonbury monks "rescued" Dunstan's remains and brought them home to Glastonbury - or so it was said at Glastonbury. (Tradition goes on to tell us that the abbey bells rang out over Glastonbury of their own accord as the great abbot's remains were brought into the sacred precincts of the abbey.)

Realising that when the Archbishop of Canterbury found out he might be somewhat displeased and might want the relics back, the monks discussed the situation. Though they claimed to have received the king's permission for what they had done, they decided the relics would be safer if they were hidden. So two monks buried them in a place of which only a few of the monks knew. There they rested for 172 years.

The expected storm arose, and refused to die down. It is recorded that more than a century after the event Canterbury was claiming that it still had Dunstan's relics and that the Glastonbury claim was false.

After the fire, Glastonbury, having urgent need of new relics to attract pilgrims and thus to raise money for the rebuilding fund, decided the time was ripe for the production of the hidden but readily-available relics of Dunstan. Soon they were disinterred and placed on display in a silver-and-gold-covered shrine.

This quarrel between Canterbury and Glastonbury continued for several centuries. In 1508 the Dunstan shrine in Canterbury was opened and was found to contain a skeleton. The two sides in the dispute could agree on one point: not even such a man as St. Dunstan could have had two skeletons! The claims could not both be genuine. Legal action was threatened. The question was never settled, however, for the activities of Henry VIII put a sudden end to the matter as we shall see shortly.

THE MOORS IN THE TIME OF THE ABBEY
(and other matters)

Sedgemoor enriched the abbey, and the abbey enriched Sedgemoor.

We have seen how at the time of the coming of the first Christian missionaries the moor was a vast salt-marsh over which the sea at high tide could flow right to the foot of the Tor. In the ninth century this marsh still remained: Athelney was an island in the swamp accessible only by boat when King Alfred took refuge there.

It is not known when the reclamation of the marsh from the sea began. Possibly some work on a small scale was carried out by the Romans. Perhaps Dunstan was the originator of some such developments. What is certain is that by the later Middle Ages substantial river-banks and sea-defences had been constructed, transforming many thousands of acres of formerly almost-useless marshland into fertile agricultural lowland. It was true that every winter it became flooded again, but in summer cattle and in some places even crops flourished on former wasteland. Particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the sea-defence works carried out and carefully maintained by the abbey transformed the moor into a source of riches.

The abbey owned much land on the moor (as well as in other parts of Somerset, and in Cornwall, and in Wales, and elsewhere) and as this increased in value the abbey received increased rents from the tenants and became more and more wealthy. Indeed the abbey owned so much land that there was a scurrilous mediaeval joke that if the Abbot of Glastonbury could marry the Abbess of Shaftesbury, their heir would inherit more land than the King of England.

Fishing too was a source of wealth. Although so much drainage work had taken place, a lake varying between two and five miles in circumference continued to exist near the village of Meare until about 1712.

As well as being rich, the abbey was powerful. Twelve hides of land were originally granted to Joseph of

Arimathaea and his followers, according to the legend. (This would be 1440 acres, taking a "hide" as 120 acres. It has been suggested by some that a hide is 160 acres, but 120 seems the more likely figure.) The twelve hides were increased by royal grants and by other means. In the nineteenth century "Glaston Twelve Hides" was a recognised district for local government purposes, stretching from near Meare to near Pilton (fig. 5) and containing 24,610 acres. At the height of its power the abbey owned much if not all of the land within this area, and a lot more further afield. By ancient custom the king had no authority within the twelve hides, and when King Edward I visited Glastonbury at Easter 1224 (having planned to hold his court for the trial of criminals wherever he happened to be at Easter) the king submitted to the custom and held his court at Street which is just outside the twelve hides.

The Tribunal building in the High Street, which is now the town museum, was at one time the courthouse from which the abbot exercised his temporal jurisdiction.

Rivalry between the Abbot of Glastonbury and the bishop at Wells (Bishop of Bath and Wells) troubled the scene from time to time. The most serious of these disturbances took place in about the year 1200. King Richard I (Richard Lionheart) had been captured on the way back from the Third Crusade and was being held to ransom by the "Holy Roman Emperor" in Germany. The Bishop of Bath and Wells, by name Savaric, was sent to Germany to negotiate terms of release, and (being a relative of the Emperor) Savaric took advantage of the situation for his own betterment: one of the documents which the Emperor required Richard to sign before his release was a document granting Glastonbury abbey to Savaric.

The monks refused to accept this new abbot. Therefore, on the day fixed for his installation, he arrived with a band of supporters from Wells who broke down the locked abbey gates, chased the monks into the refectory, locked them in, and performed the installation ceremony in their absence.

The new abbot did not unlock the refectory door until the next morning, when he brought the monks out to receive a flogging!

After further tribulations the affair reached international proportions involving the Archbishop of Rouen and others. A couple of attempts to appeal to Rome ended in dramatic hold-ups on the road. Eventually two of the monks managed to make their way secretly to Rome and obtained an audience with the Pope. Savaric was brought to heel. He died in 1205, and Jocelin, who succeeded him as Bishop of Bath and Wells, gave up his claim to the abbey in 1218.

Other less severe quarrels between Glastonbury and Wells seem to have been a recurrent theme down the centuries, but until the dissolution of the abbey the bishop had no authority over it.

(Is a faint trace of this rivalry discernible even today? In Wells Cathedral there is a fourteenth-century clock which not only tells the time but shows the phases of the moon and has working models of jousting knights. Many lovers of Glastonbury regard it as "the Glastonbury clock" but the handbook on sale in the cathedral denies that the clock was ever at Glastonbury. It is possible that there were two clocks, but this one fits the descriptions given by the fourteenth-century writer John of Glastonbury and the sixteenth-century chronicler John Leland of the clock they saw at the abbey.)

The abbey had ditches and waterways dug, to improve drainage and transport. One of the most important of these was the Pill Row Cut stretching from the River Brue west of Glastonbury to the River Axe below Axbridge. This became a major transport route, and when St. John's church (the big parish church in Glastonbury High Street) was built, some of the heavy wooden benches for the church were brought about the year 1500 by water from Bristol via the Pill Row Cut.

DISSOLUTION

Abbot Beare during his abbacy (1492-1524) founded Edgar's chapel, to the east of the great abbey church. This brought the total length of the church to 594ft. and it is said that if it were standing today it would be the largest church in England. The great church had two western towers and a central one, like Wells Cathedral, but differed from Wells in having the central tower (or maybe every tower) topped by a spire.

The reason for the building of the Edgar chapel is not clear. Maybe it was to improve the symmetry of the abbey, to prevent the main church from appearing to be too suddenly terminated at the east end; but there is a theory (which we shall come upon in chapter 5) that the whole abbey was built to a pattern which had a hidden spiritual meaning - now forgotten - and the Edgar chapel was necessary to complete the pattern.

Abbot Beare was succeeded by Abbot Whiting, and the future looked bright when he took office in 1525. It was true there seemed to be trouble in Europe, where a monk named Luther was proclaiming doctrines of which the Church leaders did not approve, and other men with such names as Calvin and Zwingli were doing likewise ... the Reformation had begun ... - but Glastonbury appeared to be in no danger: everyone had high hopes of the popular young king, Henry VIII, on whom the Pope had bestowed the honourable title of Defender of the Faith as a reward for writing a book against this Luther's teachings, so there really seemed nothing to fear. Fifteen years later Glastonbury abbey was no more.

King Henry did not particularly want to take any part in the Reformation, but he did want to divorce his wife, and the Pope refused him permission. So Henry broke with the Pope and became head of the English Church himself. Henry also needed money somewhat desperately, and - having already incurred the Pope's wrath to such an extent that to anger him

further would make little difference - he cast a covetous eye upon the wealth of the Church, and soon took steps to dissolve the English monasteries.

So far as Glastonbury was concerned, this meant that in September 1539 Henry's men carried off all the abbey treasures, stripped the valuable lead from the roofs - leaving the abbey buildings open to the sky - and hanged the octogenarian Abbot Whiting on the top of the Tor after dragging him through the streets of Glastonbury lashed to a hurdle. Then they placed the abbot's head on public exhibition over the abbey gate, and cut his body into four quarters which were put on view at Wells, Bridgwater, Ilchester and Bath as a warning to anyone who might try to withstand the will of the king.

The instruction for the trial of the abbot, noted down by Henry's agent Thomas Cromwell (not to be confused with the more famous Oliver Cromwell who lived a century later and appears further on in this chapter) has come down to us:- *"The Abbot of Glaston to be tried at Glaston and also executed there with his complices"*. When such a note as this is made by the accusers before the trial begins, there seems little point in attempting to put forward any defence!

Two monks were martyred with Whiting, on the Tor.

There seems to be some justice in the fact that Thomas Cromwell was himself executed in the following year. Thus Henry disposed of his adviser when he had no further use for him.

A legend arising from these times is that of little Jack Horner, who sat in a corner, eating his Christmas pie. He put in his thumb, pulled out a "plum", and said, "What a good boy am I". Jack is said to have been a scullion in the Glastonbury abbey kitchens, and the abbot, in an effort to save abbey property, sent the deeds of certain manors to a place of security hidden in a pie, which he entrusted to Jack. Jack became hungry, cut open the pie, and discovered the deed relating to Mells Manor (near Frome) which he promptly appropriated, and so he

acquired the estate. Other versions of the story say that Jack was not connected with the Abbey in any way, but took advantage of its downfall to pick up a bargain for himself, while others aver that the Horner family was in possession of Mells Manor long before the dissolution.

Before the dissolution an ancient cup was sent to Wales. Some say it was the Grail. This may well be the cup mentioned later in this chapter as being preserved near Aberystwyth.

The massive roofless ruin standing deserted in the centre of the town provided a ready source of stone for local builders. So, over the years, the greater part of the ruins was carried away - except St. Mary's Chapel, which seems to have been treated with some reverence, and the Abbot's Kitchen which had not been unroofed by Henry's men.

Many years later, this eight-sided stone-roofed Kitchen (which is still standing intact today) was used for a time as a Quaker Meeting House. The rest of the Abbey lay desolate, and remained so until the early twentieth century.

There was no possibility of rebuilding. All the treasures had been sold, so had the thousands of acres of Abbey lands, and Henry had taken all the proceeds. Furthermore, England was now protestant, and within ten years Roman Catholic practices were forbidden by law. An attempt a few years later by Queen Mary to take England back into the Roman Church met with no lasting success. During her reign, four of the old monks begged to be given the site, in order to re-found the Abbey, but Mary's death brought this venture to an abrupt end. For more than three and a half centuries the ruins decayed.

THE MOORS AFTER THE DISSOLUTION

Some of the Abbey stonework may well have gone into repairing the sea-walls which the monks had originally built, but it seems likely that after the dissolution the sea-defences were gradually allowed to fall into a less substantial state, for on 20th. January 1607 the sea broke through.

Floods on Sedgemoor can be of three kinds: fresh water, "thick" water and salt water. A fresh-water flood, caused by heavy rain being unable to drain away, is inconvenient but not particularly harmful as long as it does not hang about too long. A thick-water flood occurs when a river such as the Parrett, thick with soil washed down from its headwaters in the hills, overflows its banks. Such a flood coming after harvest, and going away after the water has lain long enough to deposit its silt, can be positively beneficial, for the sediment it leaves is as good as a dressing of manure. On the other hand a salt-water flood, caused by the sea breaking in, has on more than one occasion been a disaster.

The 1607 inundation covered an area five miles wide and extended twenty miles inland. Much of this expanse of floodwater was over ten feet deep, and for a time Glastonbury was an island.

In 1703 a great storm took place: the tide swept over the top of the sea walls and spread six miles inland. Another serious sea-flood occurred in 1811 when the sea again reached - though this time it did not completely surround - Glastonbury. As recently as 1902 the Bristol-Bridgwater road was covered by the sea.

Sea-water floods are the more terrifying, but rain-water floods are the more common. Notable (or notorious) rain-water floods have included those of 1917, 1919, 1929 and 1960. It is said that in 1917 and 1919 there were 70,000 acres flooded - and that the 1929 inundation was worse and took three months to drain away. The engineering of the new Huntspill River has, we trust, put an end to floods

of this size, and it is hoped that the floods of 1960 (which occurred in the wettest month Sedgemoor has known this century) will prove exceptional. The last three months of 1960 will long be remembered as the days when rescue-boats sailed the main street in Taunton - the days when Exeter families were driven to their upstairs rooms on no less than five occasions as the flood-waters swirled into their homes - the days when boats could make no headway against the current in the streets of Bath - the days when several thousand Cardiff homes were flooded. Moreover, the deluge did not limit itself to Wales and the south-west: places as far away as Kent, Lincolnshire, and the north of England were also affected. Truly an abnormal situation.

The flood problem on Sedgemoor was not really brought under reasonable control (i.e. control of a worse-than-average flood - though not the 1960 state of affairs) until the time of the Second World War. Then a completely new river, the Huntspill River, was dug, combining a drainage scheme with a war-effort scheme to supply water to a munitions factory, and the effect of this new waterway and modern pumping machinery is that flooding is greatly reduced. Gone are the days when the moorland inhabitants philosophically retreated upstairs and moored a boat to the windowsill...

But flooding can still occur, as was shown all too clearly in 1960. Anyone buying property on Sedgemoor must realise that although the pumps are capable of moving vast quantities of water, there cannot be a complete answer to the problem. If the rivers and emergency overflow areas are brim-full with rainwater *and it cannot get away* because there happens to be a high tide in the Bristol Channel, the point can be reached when any further rainfall must flood the moor, because there is just nowhere to pump it to. At high tide the Bristol Channel is higher than parts of Sedgemoor.

One of the basic problems is the inability of the

very flat sluggish River Parrett to carry away rainfall at anything like the required speed, particularly at high tide. The modern pumps, the artificial Huntspill River, and other recent engineering works are designed to counter this problem which Nature has put in man's way, so far as practicable.

In 1645 the waters of the River Parrett nearly - but not quite - changed the course of British history. Oliver Cromwell was making a reconnaissance of the Parrett upstream from Bridgwater in a small boat, when he was caught by the bore (the sudden violent wave which rushes up the river, caused by the very strong flowing of the tide) and was almost capsised. The boat stayed afloat and Cromwell went on to capture Bridgwater Castle, Bridgwater having backed the wrong side in the Civil War by supporting the king.

Forty years later Bridgwater backed the losing side again when it gave its support to the Duke of Monmouth's attempt to set himself up as king. He made his headquarters in Bridgwater and his men met the king's army on Sedgemoor between Bridgwater and Glastonbury. In the Battle of Sedgemoor (1685 - the last battle fought on English soil) Monmouth's defeat was swift, certain and severe. So was the king's vengeance meted out by Judge Jeffries.

GLASTONBURY AFTER THE DISSOLUTION

Glastonbury must have been a poor place in the years following the dissolution of the abbey. Its chief source of employment and revenue had gone. An attempt to bring industry in the form of a band of Flemish weavers to the town failed miserably. When the weavers arrived in 1551 no adequate premises or equipment were ready for them, and they seem to have had to camp out in a state of near-destitution in the abbey ruins. When Mary came to the throne two years later they departed from England, fearing persecution for their protestant beliefs.

In 1751 an asthma sufferer dreamt that if he drank,

fasting, from the Chalice Well on three successive Sundays he would be cured. He did so, and pronounced himself cured. Thereupon Glastonbury enjoyed a brief popularity as a spa - but then someone died apparently from drinking too much of the water, and its popularity collapsed. The little Pump Room built at this time still stands in Magdalene Street.

In 1833 a canal was opened linking Glastonbury with Highbridge and the sea. It operated for only twenty-one years before being superseded by a railway. From 1865 to 1867 Glastonbury was on the through route from Cardiff to Cherbourg - by steamer from Cardiff to Burnham-on-Sea, rail from Burnham to Poole, and steamer from Poole to Cherbourg. After only two years the Poole-Cherbourg service was discontinued, and in 1888 regular services between Burnham and Cardiff ceased. Now the railway has gone too. But today, tourists come by road in their thousands, and seem to be the chief source of the prosperity which the town at present enjoys.

The hapless abbey ruins passed through the ownership of various laymen, one of whom was attainted of treason. There was a proposal to convert the site into an Arthurian school of chivalry, and at one time somebody talked of shipping the entire ruins off to America.

On 6th. June 1907 the ruins were bought for their present owners, the Church of England, at public auction. Since then they have been tidied up, maintained, and opened to the public. The purchase money was raised by public subscription, the subscribers including King Edward VII and his son who later became King George V. The latter with his wife (later Queen Mary) attended the ceremony held in the ruins on 22nd. June 1909 at which the title-deeds were handed to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Now organised pilgrimages again take place - but that is a matter for the final chapter of this book, in which present-day happenings in Glastonbury and

its neighbourhood are considered.

AUSTIN RINGWODE

The last of the Glastonbury monks is believed to have been one Austin Ringwode, who died in a cottage which he occupied in Glastonbury in 1587. He was said to be endowed with the gift of prophecy. On his deathbed he foretold that "*the abbey will one day be repaired and rebuilt for the like worship which has ceased; and then peace and plenty will for a long time abound*". That sounds like the Millennium.

CHAPTER 4

KING ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS - AND THE HOLY GRAIL

THE HISTORICAL ARTHUR

Arthur almost certainly existed.

After the Roman legions finally left our shores in the early fifth century A.D., the native British were attacked by Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and other warlike bands against whom there was little protection. But, in this age when many a man never went more than a few miles from his home-village, there are signs of the existence of a fast-travelling band of cavalry which at times made things very hot for the attackers, and which was led by a renowned fighter. Probably he and his men wore an early form of chain-mail. Ancient references to his fasting and vigil and the sign of the cross on his breastplate suggest that he may have been a Christian in the fullest sense of the word. It is said he died in A.D. 516 - or 539 - or was it 542? - No-one really knows. This powerful west-country chieftain was Arthur.

Now: let us see what folk-lore can make of that.

First it transforms the whole band (by late mediaeval times) into knights in shining armour resplendent with all the chivalry and the heraldry of the Middle Ages. Then it really goes to town on Arthur's life-story.

Before we start, let us remember that for several centuries the legends of Arthur and his "knights" were handed down by word of mouth, so there are many different versions. No-one really attempted a comprehensive collection of these stories until Sir Thomas Malory did so, having time on his hands during a lengthy stay in prison, in the fifteenth century. In

1485 the printer Caxton published Malory's work under the title "Morte d'Arthur".

Before Malory there were earlier writers using this general theme, as we shall see in this chapter. After Malory came others (including Tennyson: "Idylls of the King", and Wagner: "Parsifal" and "Tristan and Isolde") but Malory remains the best-known, so we will start with an outline of the story based chiefly on his version.

THE LATE MEDIAEVAL ARTHURIAN LEGEND

"Whoso pulleth this sword out of this stone is rightwise born king of all England" - and the youth Arthur, looking for a sword for his friend who has come without one, easily performs the feat which has defeated the mightiest knights of the realm.

After he has withdrawn the sword from the stone several times the knights finally acknowledge him as king and rally to his side. In due course a great Round Table is given to Arthur by his wife Guinevere's father - who had received it from Arthur's father Uther Pendragon. One hundred and fifty of the finest knights are given seats at this table. Sir Lancelot, Sir Gawain, Sir Bedivere - their names became a byword for courtly and knightly chivalry. One seat remained vacant, reserved for him who would be the purest knight in all the world.

Many were the feats they performed, releasing prisoners from the dungeons of evil knights, killing dragons, rescuing ladies in distress, and so on. Under the wise command of Arthur (ably assisted by the magician Merlin) they were pure and chivalrous in life, courageous and victorious in battle and tournament.

(Merlin, by the way, is said to have used his magic powers to transport Stonehenge to its present site from Ireland about the fifth century A.D. - those who study the Druids' use of Stonehenge in the B.C. era are not impressed with the idea!)

There seems no reason to connect the drawing of the

sword from the stone with Glastonbury. Arthur's fame is widespread - legends of him survive in Cornwall, Snowdonia, Scotland, and many other places. His court was for a time at Winchester. Whoever he was, he was highly mobile in an age when mobility was rare. But many people believe that his chief seat Camelot was at Cadbury Camp twelve miles south-east of Glastonbury, and that the Round Table was there. There is archaeological evidence that Cadbury Camp was re-fortified after the Romans had left Britain, and there are traces there of the great wooden hall of some chieftain.

Into this story of knightly valour are woven enchantments and sorceries almost innumerable. On one occasion Arthur fights with a knight whose strength is exceptional: Arthur's sword is broken and he is only saved by Merlin, who hastily enchants the other knight into a deep sleep. Merlin then tells Arthur to go to the water's edge. There a mysterious Lady of the Lake gives him a fresh sword - it is Excalibur, the sword he drew from the stone. While he bears this sword he will be invincible in battle, and while he wears its scabbard he will never be wounded. "*When the time comes, see that thou givest it to me again*", she warns. Legend has it that it was near Pomparles ("dangerous bridge") on the Street-Glastonbury road, that Arthur received Excalibur.

Now meet the chief villain of the piece, Arthur's half-sister, Morgan le Fay - a jealous woman who wanted Arthur dead. By her magic arts she stole Excalibur and the scabbard. Arthur recovered them - but only to have her steal the scabbard again while he slept, and hurl it into the sea. Her attempts to steal Excalibur again did not succeed.

Sir Lancelot, the finest of the knights, fell in love with Arthur's queen, Guinevere, and she with him. Being a "perfect gentle knight" he would not be untrue to his knightly vows nor to his king, and left the court on many strange adventures. Once he released a princess, Elaine, who was sitting in a bath of scalding

water, held there by enchantment until the finest knight in all Christendom should release her. She was, not unnaturally, very grateful for her release, and asked him whether he would also slay a dragon whose unauthorised residence in their family tomb was causing them some inconvenience. He obligingly did so, and Elaine's father King Pellès (a descendant, so the legend says, of Joseph of Arimathaea) hoped Sir Lancelot could be persuaded to marry the very beautiful Elaine. But no! All his love was for Guinevere and though he could not woo her he had no desire for any other lady. Eventually the king's enchantress was called in. By disguising Elaine as Guinevere and casting a spell over Sir Lancelot she induced Sir Lancelot to make love to Elaine. The son who was subsequently born became Sir Galahad, the purest knight of all, who sixteen years later filled the vacant seat at the Round Table.

Sir Lancelot, as soon as he recovered from the spell, was filled with remorse, and returned in deep sorrow to Arthur's court, where Guinevere on hearing his story so upbraided him that he went out of his mind. For a long time he wandered in the forest living off berries and roots, until in his madness he wandered into the city of the castle of King Pellès. Elaine recognised him, and realising that his sorry condition was due to the deception in which she had partaken, she had him laid in the room of the Grail.

THE GRAIL

The legend of the Holy Grail, or Sangreal, is so intermingled with the Arthurian legends that we must digress to look at it briefly before continuing further. The usual story is that the Grail is the chalice or cup used by Christ at the Last Supper. According to one version, after Christ was condemned Pontius Pilate gave the cup to Joseph of Arimathaea, and in it Joseph or his son Josephes caught drops of the blood of Christ as he hung dying on the cross, and Joseph brought the cup with the blood to Glastonbury. (There is no apparent reason why Pontius Pilate should have had the cup, but let us

not get too concerned over that!)

In an alternative version Josephes caught the mingled blood and sweat of our Lord in two "cruets" which Joseph brought to Glastonbury. Or alternatively again drops of the blood fell into Josephes' shirt as the body of Christ was being taken down from the cross, and Joseph put the precious drops into the two cruets.

Probably there is a connection here between the word "cruet" and the Latin "*cruentia*" ("bloody") so any sort of vessel could be meant, but this tradition is the reason why Joseph's heraldic Achievement includes "a cross between two cruets" - yet the chalice, and not cruets, is the Arthurian Grail.

The legend recounts how Joseph buried the Grail chalice (or the two cruets) by the spring in the little hill at the foot of the Tor - hence the names Chalice Hill, Chalice Spring, Chalice Well. It has never been found.

Other versions differ: there is to this day a very ancient wooden cup, said to have healing properties, at a place near Aberystwyth in Wales. Some say this is the Grail. Other vessels with similar claims are preserved at Antioch, Genoa, and Valencia, and there is a tradition that the true vessel is hidden in a cave in the Pyrenees.

Yet the "Christianised" Grail seems to be only a secondary story, built upon a much older story of a search for a talisman. Gwyn ap Nudd, Annwn, and the glass castle (see page 13) are the main subjects of this legend.

In one version, the Grail is a mysterious life-giving object guarded by a maimed king (Pelles, it seems) whose health has some bearing on the fertility of the land. A spell has been cast which can only be broken (and the king and his land restored) by

a pure and perfect knight asking a certain question.

In the Arthurian legend the Grail becomes a glorious chalice covered by a veil (as used in Anglican communion services and the Roman Mass) and kept in the castle of King Pellès, the beautiful Elaine's father. From time to time the cup was carried about by unseen hands, a mystic light shining from it. It was this sight which restored Sir Lancelot: as he lay in the room the wondrous light shone through the veil; he recovered his mind and his physical strength, and returned to his seat at the Round Table.

THE LATE MEDIAEVAL ARTHURIAN LEGEND (continued)

Years passed, with joustings, adventures, and rightings of wrongs. Then on the night that Sir Galahad took his seat at the Round Table for the first time, the Holy Grail borne by unseen hands moved round the Table. They did not see the Grail itself, so closely was it veiled, and yet the brilliance of its light, even through the veil, dazzled them.

When the amazing sight had vanished, the impetuous Sir Gawain vowed that on the morrow he would ride forth in quest of the Grail, to see if he might see it plain without the veil. Caught up in his enthusiasm many others swore similarly, but Arthur saw that this would be the end of the Round Table fellowship, and so it proved. Many did not return. Of those who rode forth in accordance with their irrevocable vow, only four saw even a glimpse of the Grail.

Sir Lancelot saw it veiled, held by a priest at a silver altar amid brilliant light in a room of some unknown castle; he saw through the doorway and was not accounted worthy to enter. The priest seemed to stumble, but as Sir Lancelot rushed forward to assist, a blast of fire hurled him back. He then returned to Arthur's court knowing he had fulfilled his vow as far as he would be allowed to do so.

Three knights - Sir Perceval, Sir Bors and young Sir Galahad - were taken by an enchanted ship to an unknown

land. There they see the veiled Grail attended by Joseph of Arimathaea in priestly robes, and it is vouchsafed to Sir Galahad to see it in its full glory unveiled. After the vision Sir Perceval and Sir Bors take up Sir Galahad's dead body and reverently bury it. Sir Perceval, a sick man, dies soon afterwards, and only Sir Bors returns to Arthur's court to tell the tale.

In another version, Sir Galahad does not die but becomes king of that land. In yet another version, in which the scene takes place in King Pelles' castle, Sir Galahad becomes Priest of the Grail; he cures King Pelles of the wound which had long kept him maimed, and he performs the marriage ceremony between Sir Perceval and the Grail Maiden Branchefleur. After King Pelles' death Sir Perceval and Branchefleur become king and queen of that land. They have a son, Lohengrin.

After the Grail episode the fellowship at Arthur's court is never the same again. Arthur becomes wearied of the continuing love which Sir Lancelot and Guinevere feel for each other, and orders Guinevere to be burnt at the stake. Sir Lancelot rides to her rescue and carries her off to his own castle, where he is besieged by Arthur. Battle follows: eventually Sir Bors (fighting on Sir Lancelot's side) has Arthur at his mercy, but Sir Lancelot allows Arthur his life, extracting from him a promise that Guinevere can return and live in safety at Arthur's court. Sir Lancelot departs to Brittany, but Arthur (at the instigation of Sir Gawain, whose two brothers Sir Lancelot had accidentally killed in the fighting) makes war again on him in Brittany.

Meanwhile, other factions are at work. Mordred, the son of Morgan le Fay, takes the opportunity to spread a rumour of Arthur's death and to proclaim himself king in his place. Guinevere takes refuge in the Tower of London, where Mordred besieges her; the Archbishop of Canterbury who tries to intercede is forced to flee, and takes refuge in the abbey at Glastonbury.

In a great battle the two opposing armies (Arthur's and Mordred's) are wiped out - only four men remain

alive on the battlefield. These are, on one side, Arthur and his knights Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere, and on the other, Mordred alone. Arthur assails Mordred and runs him through, but as he dies Mordred delivers a crashing blow with his sword to Arthur's head. A death-blow.

As Arthur lies dying he realises that he is close to the spot where his sword Excalibur was delivered to him. Remembering the instruction to return it, he sends Sir Bedivere who hurls it over the lake. A hand rising from the waters catches it and waves it three times before disappearing, and then a ship filled with fair ladies appears: Arthur is taken aboard, saying he departs for the vale of Avalon "there to heal me of my grievous wound".

The Glastonbury area is accepted as Avalon, though it is not clear whether the name stems from Avilion ("isle of departed spirits") or King Avalloc (who we met on the Tor on page 13) or Avalon meaning "apple-orchard" (an apt description of the area) or some other source. Perhaps all these names are inter-connected.

Sir Bedivere, who has walked through the night from the battlefield, arrives in the morning at Glastonbury, where he comes upon a hermit praying beside a newly-filled grave. The hermit reports that a group of ladies buried a corpse - he knows not whose - that night, and Sir Bedivere realises it is the grave of Arthur; but the legend ends with the prophecy that he is only sleeping until his country needs him...

Guinevere retreats to a nunnery, of which eventually she becomes the abbess. She grants Sir Lancelot one last interview and he too enters a religious order. When Guinevere dies, Sir Lancelot as priest lays her to rest at Glastonbury alongside Arthur.

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The Arthurian legends in one form or another have been used by many writers, from Geoffrey of Monmouth in his "*Historia Regum Britanniae*" in the twelfth century, to Tennyson's "*Idylls*" in the nineteenth century, and various twentieth-century writers.

The story we have just seen is (more or less) an outline of the form of the legend used by Sir Thomas Malory for his fifteenth-century "Morte d'Arthur". This represents one of the most developed forms: that is to say, a form much removed from the original truth - assuming there is any truth at the source of the tale. Subsidiary stories, alternatives and earlier versions are legion: we will glance briefly at a few of them, including a group I call *the Percival story*.

EARLIER MEDIAEVAL VERSIONS

In one legend, which appears to be a carry-over from a pre-Christian story, Arthur and his followers visit the underworld, the realm of Gwyn ap Nudd, to bring back a cauldron of plenty. In others, Arthur appears as a sun-god, a wind-god, a bird-god, and a leader of the Wild Hunt riding with Gwyn ap Nudd through the thunderclouds into Annwn (Hades). In one case, the Grail is a jewel formerly held by angels who remained neutral during Lucifer's rebellion and who therefore fell but to a lesser depth. Some have tried to "spiritualise" the Grail into an abstract idea - "man's spiritual goal".

One suspects that in the legend of Joseph bringing Christ's blood in the Grail chalice we see some ancient Briton's complete misunderstanding of an early attempt to teach the doctrine of the Real Presence, i.e. the doctrine (now held by only some denominations) that Christ Himself is present in the bread (His body) and wine (His blood) of the holy sacrament. On being instructed that the wine in the chalice was Christ's blood, might not an ignorant tribesman jump to the conclusion that Joseph must therefore have used the chalice to *catch* the blood when Christ was bleeding? On the other hand, reliquary cups containing blood are not unknown, and Joseph's cup or cruets would come into this category.

The Real Presence doctrine crops up again in another

story of Arthur. At dawn on Ash Wednesday Arthur enters the chapel of the St. Mary Magdalene hermitage at Beckery. (This hermitage, the traditional resort of St. Bridget, was about a mile from Glastonbury, near Wearyall Hill: the chapel foundations were unearthed in the late nineteenth century.) The door is guarded by fiery swords so that no-one unworthy can enter. An aged priest begins to say Mass. The Virgin Mary comes with the child Jesus in her arms. The child is taken as the sacrament and His flesh is eaten, but afterwards the child re-appears, whole and unharmed.

This story is also found (with numerous changes of detail and with the Mass taking place at the unknown St. Augustine's chapel in the White Forest instead of at Beckery) in "The High History of the Holy Graal". The "High History" and other versions of the same series of adventures which we can group together under the general title of *the Percival story*, are of sufficient interest to warrant a few pages of investigation.

THE PERCIVAL STORY - INTRODUCTION

The Percival story is a tangled but fascinating knot dealing (so far as I can see) with twelfth-century romantically-written accounts of a pre-Christian ceremony. Confused and running together we seem to see scenes from the ancient sun-worship religion with its human sacrifices, and scenes from the first century A.D. when sun-worship still survived but most of the bloodthirstiness had been replaced by a ritual blood-letting in what had become an initiation ceremony. In symbolic language we see the initiation, and mixed with it an account of the final exorcism when the cult gave way to Christianity. We see a hideous-old-hag idol, and a hideous old hag who worshipped an idol.

There are several versions of what became the Percival story. That by Chrestien de Troyes written in French verse is probably the earliest. Then there is "Parzival" written in German verse by Wolfram von Eschenbach (died 1220), the Welsh "Mabinogion" (anonymous), the French prose "Queste

del Saint Graal" by Walter Map (died 1210) which Malory used, and others. Then there is an anonymous French prose version, written probably prior to 1225, sometimes called "Perlesvaus". This follows the de Troyes version, but with some additions, and has been translated into English by Sebastian Evans under the title "The High History of the Holy Graal".

The hero in the de Troyes version is Percival, which seems to be more a title than a name - it means to pierce the vale (or veil?), to become an initiate. Von Eschenbach also calls his hero Parzival. But in one version Sir Gawain is the hero, and in the "High History" the adventures appear of Sir Percival, Sir Gawain, Sir Lancelot, and Arthur himself. Each of them seems to come from the same background and to experience the same kind of extraordinary adventures. Can we see what has happened? Maybe each tribe had its own version of the story; only the names were different. As the tribes, and their folk-lore stories, combined, each hero had to be brought in and the adventures repeated with different details. In this group of stories we see Percival, Gawain, Lancelot and Arthur all coming from a humble upbringing, visiting a strange chapel, beholding the Grail, and undergoing other similar adventures.

THE PERCIVAL STORY - SUMMARY

Cutting out all the repetition we seem to have a story something like this:- The hero, brought up by his mother in the forest without knowledge of the world, comes to Arthur's court where he learns chivalry. He sets off to seek adventures and comes to the castle of the rich Fisher King. (In Map's version, the Fisher King is named King Pellles. In the "High History", he is King Fisherman. Some stories say he is a kinsman of Joseph of Arimathaea, but this is probably a "Christianisation" of the pre-Christian story.) The Fisher King has been maimed by a thigh-wound which will not heal. As they feast, the hero is shown a lance from which blood perpetually flows, and a "Grail" outshining the light of

the candles, but he does not venture to ask about the service these talismans perform. He falls asleep, and when he wakes the castle is deserted. He returns to Arthur's court. A hideous hag (or, in "High History", three ladies, one of them bald) comes there and rebukes him, telling him that if he had asked about the lance and Grail, the Fisher King would have been cured and the land would have prospered.

After several years the hero again finds himself in the castle of the Fisher King, after an adventure in a haunted chapel where he sees a light extinguished by a black hand. This time when he sees the lance and Grail he asks about them. The king is cured of his wound, and the hero is initiated into the use of the lance and Grail and is told how to overcome the power of the black hand. With this knowledge he cleanses the haunted chapel; the extinguished light re-lights itself. The hero eventually becomes successor to the Fisher King who dies peacefully. After reigning for seven years the hero follows a hermit (called Joseus in one version) and serves God for ten years in the wilderness, until the hero's death. He takes the lance and Grail into the wilderness with him.

THE PERCIVAL STORY - A SUGGESTED EXPLANATION *(and a theory about the Grail)*

The story shows the Grail as an inexhaustible supply of something very precious. To obtain it seems to involve the crossing of water, for the various stories speak of a ferryman's boat or a demon water-horse which leaves its rider half-drowned. There is also the challenge to have the courage to behead a man on the condition that the hero will suffer the same fate himself in a year's time - an honour which Sir Lancelot refuses. This challenge is also made to Sir Gawain in the fourteenth-century poem "Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight", the scene for which is set by Wearyall Hill.

What were this lance and Grail? Did they exist, and if so where were they kept?

The Grail, throughout all the stories, seems to be either a cauldron or a chalice. "Oh no," says von Eschenbach somewhat indignantly in "Parzival". "It was a stone." So let us see what a cauldron, a chalice and a (jewel) stone have in common. They all have the power to bend light. A diamond left in the sun will refract the sun's rays on the same principle as a lens. The inside of a polished cauldron will do the same by reflection. If the cauldron is shallow and has the same curvature as the reflector of a modern motor-car headlamp, it can focus the rays to a point. As for a chalice - if it is polished metal it will reflect like the cauldron; if it is a glass goblet it has the power to bend the sun's rays into a very bright spot. Try it for yourself on a bright sunny day with a wineglass full of water - but be careful: this experiment is quite capable of burning the house down. The concentrated ray can also blind; and the legends tell us of kings who were blinded when they approached too close to the Grail.

So, according to the theory set out by Mrs. Flavia Anderson in her book on the Grail "The Ancient Secret", here is our Grail: our inexhaustible source of something precious. It is an unending source of the power to call down fire from heaven.

The Druids - and their predecessors the priest-kings - kept such knowledge within the band of initiates. By the last century B.C. the Druids probably had one or more glass Grails - the use of glass to bring down light is mentioned in the Apocrypha - but until the Romans came the ordinary people were unlikely to have been familiar with glass, except small beads: they knew of it as a dream-like substance of which Gwyn ap Nudd's castle was made.

So the symbolism of the lance becomes clear: the lance is the lance of sunlight falling into the Grail and being brought by it to a focal spot. At the focal point tinder is placed, and - behold! - the cosmic fusion of the solar energy and the terrestrial force takes place: the tinder smoulders, then bursts into

flame. Let us forget the stories which, trying to "Christianise" these talismans, say the lance is that which pierced Christ and will bleed till Doomsday into the Grail last-supper cup.

Some of the legends' references (details being outside the scope of this book) seem to date back to the time of King Solomon (about 1000 B.C.) and it is thought Phoenician traders came to the Mendip mines as far back as his day. Attempts have been made to show links with Joseph son of Jacob in Egypt, and even with Adam and Eve. There seems to be a definite Egyptian sun-worship influence.

As the Grail is connected with fire, it is not surprising there is a legend that it was a huge ruby: in this tale, when Satan led his rebellion a shining ruby was the rallying-point for his armies until St. Michael smote it out of heaven. It fell to earth where the sea-folk (Phoenicians) fashioned it into a wonderful cup which Solomon caused to be brought to him. After Solomon's death no-one knew of its fate until Christ used it for the Last Supper!

It was not uncommon for pagans to hide their sacred talismans underground for the winter. Despite persistent theories, there are no caves known at present under Glastonbury Tor except the underground hollow used by the Bristol Waterworks Company as a reservoir. Let us go five miles north to the Mendip country: here are caves in abundance. We are going to visit what may have been the castle of the Fisher King. (There are two conflicting theories: one of them puts the Fisher King's castle on Wearyall Hill, the other puts it where we are going.) Before we go there, let me say I have no idea whether or not there is any truth in this story. But the purpose of this book is to recount - and not to give judgment on - the tales: and this tale is a good one.

If a cave goes a few yards (or even a few dozen yards) and then comes to a blank end, it will hold no special terror for primitive man. But a cave that goes further than he can penetrate ... ah, here is a possible passage to the underworld. If this cave then proceeds to make

noises - as it will if its dark depths contain an underground river - this must indeed be a gate to Hades.

In the Mendip range there is such a cave, where the sound of clashing cymbals can still be heard at certain periods of the year - though modern science has explained the phenomenon as a natural suction of the river in flood time. Let us bear in mind the description by the classical writer Lucan of such a mouth of Hades, in which he could be referring to this very cavern - though let us remember the underworld could have several entrances, and (speaking from memory) he says he believes this cave to be near Marseilles:- *"A grove there was, untouched by men's hands from ancient times, whose interlacing boughs enclosed a space of darkness and cold shade, and banished the sunlight far above ... gods were worshipped there with savage rites, the altars were heaped with hideous offerings, and every tree was sprinkled with human gore. On those boughs, birds feared to perch; in those coverts wild beasts would not lie down ... water fell there in abundance from dark springs. The images of the gods, grim and rude, were uncouth blocks formed of felled tree-trunks. Their mere antiquity and the ghastly hue of their rotten timber struck terror: men feel less awe of deities worshipped under familiar forms, so much does it increase their sense of fear, not to know the gods whom they dread ... often the subterranean hollows quaked and bellowed ... the people never resorted thither to worship at close quarters but left the place to the gods, for ... the priest himself dreads their approach and fears to surprise the Lord of the Grove".*

Come, let us enter Wookey Hole Cave.

As we walk up the path leading to the cave, about two miles from Wells and seven miles from Glastonbury, we are in a lovely wooded glade with, on our left, the ground rising steeply, and, on our right, a drop to the valley floor where the River Axe runs. We come to a vertical rock-face many feet in height, hung with creepers. From a gash in the rock the river enters the light of day after its long course underground. Higher

and to the left is the dry bed of an earlier course of the river. It is here that we pass through the turnstile into the underworld beneath Mendip.

Our guide will lead us through three cavernous chambers joined by narrow water-worn rifts in the rock, and then about 170 yards from the entrance we shall find ourselves standing on a sandy underground beach beside the subterranean river which comes from a fourth chamber, known as the Holy Hole, through a low arch of rock. The river fills the arch: the journey to the fourth chamber would be perilous indeed without diving equipment. We can go no further: but divers have taken electricity to the fourth chamber and our guide will switch on the light so that we can see clearly the arch, silhouetted against the limpid turquoise water, before we return.

The river water is held above its normal level by a sluice which provides water for the paper-mill in the valley. When the sluice is opened and the water returns to its natural level it is possible to enter the Holy Hole by lying flat in a boat, or sometimes by wading, but the journey is far from easy.

Twenty chambers are known but beyond the Holy Hole they are accessible only to divers; the fifth chamber is completely submerged. In the nineteenth chamber the water is over eighty feet deep, but the twentieth chamber (first entered on 24th. January 1970) is above water and contains stalagmite formations of outstanding beauty. As there is fresh air in the chamber it is hoped an entrance from the surface may one day be discovered.

The cave's museum has an interesting little collection of skulls and other bones, mostly pulled out of the underground river, together with ancient trinkets, pottery similar to that found in the Lake Villages, and photographs of the twentieth chamber.

In the first of the three chambers through which we came stands an almost jet-black stalagmite several feet high overlooking the river, seeming in the dim light like a woman - a hideous and loathsome hag. This damsel, our

guide informs us, has been known since time immemorial as the Witch of Wookey. He will also point out the little flattish stalagmite nearby; her dog.

Let us put the clock back a few centuries. We have seen how Arthur, or one of his knights, or at any rate *someone* went to the "Fisher King's Castle" and took part in an initiation ceremony there which involved the Grail. Then we saw a way in which the Grail might indeed have been a chalice giving forth a brilliant light just as the legends tell. And then we came here to Wookey Hole to consider a theory that it was the Fisher King's Castle, that the Grail was kept here, and that the ceremony which was the source of the legend was performed here. So let us in our imagination look in on what this ceremony might have been like, turning our watches back right beyond Arthurian days into the B.C. era.

The electric lights dim into the fiery torches which we and our chanting companions are holding aloft. The flickering flames glint upon the twisted black stalagmite figure ... we can tell she is no mere witch - she is Brandigan (or Persephone) the dreaded goddess. As we wait in the eerie torchlight let us think on what is about to happen. Be warned: if you suffer from nightmares close this book *now*.

The original pre-Christian Grail legends tell of a quest for a cauldron of plenty. The legends are based on truth: such a quest took place every year in the spring. Each year a youth was chosen to be king for a year. He represented and was said to embody the sun-god but at the end of the year he would die. We saw how both Sir Gawain and Sir Lancelot were asked to show the courage to behead a man on the condition that they suffer the same fate in a year's time. - See: here comes the chosen new king - the new "divine youth" now.

He fights with the youth whose year has ended: it is a ritual fight but it is a real sword which whistles through the air to end it, and a real human head which rolls across the cave floor spurting blood. The

decapitated body of the ex-king spouts blood upon the goddess, upon the new king, and upon the worshippers. The new king takes his predecessor's head and lays it reverently at the feet of the black goddess. The flaming brand which she is holding, signifying the old reign, is extinguished. (The sculpted cavity in the black stalagmite, in which the brand was placed, exists to this day.)

The new king now proceeds to the second chamber, to the feast in the hall of the Fisher King. The chanting and dancing grows in volume and frenzy, led by the maimed Fisher King. (Maimed? He may well have represented the Egyptian crane-god and hopped around on one leg! Cranes are noted fishers.) We may possibly see a relic of the ritual dances today in Morris Dancing. Some Morris men still have a traditional longsword dance, at the end of which their (wooden) swords sweep down to surround the neck of their chosen "victim".

The youth finds the smoky atmosphere makes him drowsy ... he must remember to ask concerning the service of the Grail. If he omits to do so now, on his return tomorrow he will find the chamber deserted. (There is a parallel here to the question the son must ask in the Jewish Passover feast - *Exodus 12*.)

Having asked about, and been instructed in, the use of the Grail, he must obtain the Grail-cauldron for himself from the Holy Hole where it has been hidden for the winter. (There may have been a real lance too, symbolic not only of the sun-ray but also of that other piece of pre-Druid equipment we shall come across in chapter 5: the surveyor's staff.)

The senior Druids know the safest route but the "divine youth" has not been here before. Into the river of the underworld he plunges, maybe wading, maybe diving. Into the blackness of the unknown Hades beyond the arch. He is going against the current of the waters. No wonder the legends speak of ferrymen's boats and demon water-horses leaving the hero half-drowned!

On at least one occasion the hero evidently did not

return, for there is a legend (which seems to refer to this cave) of one who in his third attempt at the stream was taken to fairyland and never seen again. It is strange however that the only skeleton found in the Holy Hole was that of a female.

The "divine youth" returns out of the watery cavern with the Grail. The next stage of the ceremony will be the procession from the cave to Glastonbury Tor. It seems to me that traces of a possible "ley-line" processional route can still be seen on the Ordnance Survey map. On reaching the foot of the Tor the procession ascends by way of the Druids' labyrinth by which the Tor must be encircled seven times before the summit can be reached. (More about "ley lines" and the Tor labyrinth comes in chapter 5.) On reaching the summit the new fire is kindled by the new "divine youth" with the cauldron. As the tinder ignites, he has proved his kingship and godship by calling down fire from heaven. The new king is in the ascendant: Winter is vanquished: fertility will return to the land.

The fire he kindles atop the Tor will burn unceasingly throughout the year of his reign. - If the sacred fire went out by accident the vestal virgins who tended it were whipped by the priest and had to rub two sticks together!

I must mention that the cave's guidebook says the human-sacrifice theory is disproved on the grounds that none of the eighteen human skulls recovered from the river showed signs of decapitation. To my mind, this proves nothing one way or the other: those who want to believe the sacrifices theory have the ready answer that the severed head and body would have been taken in solemn procession to burial on Glastonbury Tor.

The sacrifice is presumably the source of the local tradition of an annual battle between Gwyn ap Nudd and one Gwyther for possession of a maiden.

So the story is one of initiation: initiation of a youth to be the sun-god king, only to be beheaded at

the end of the year. When Sir Lancelot in the legend refuses to be king on these terms, a dwarf takes his place after Sir Lancelot performs the quest. Perhaps we see here the beginnings of the practice of substituting some lesser person to die instead of a good king. Eventually a goat was substituted as a scapegoat.

The story of Aladdin, with his cave and magic lamp, probably comes from the same source as the Grail legend. It is also possible, without trying too hard, to bring in Lohengrin, and the whole of Wagner's "Ring des Nibelungen".

The legend tells also of the end of the cult. We saw that the hero, after becoming king, followed the hermit Joseus into the wilderness, taking the lance and Grail with him. Who was this hero who went away? There is a theory that it could have been Bran, the father of Caractacus; we met him briefly at the end of chapter 2. Bran was an arch-Druid, who was captured and taken to Rome. He was converted there and subsequently returned to this land as a Christian missionary. It is quite possible that he handed over the cult's sacred Grail to Joseph of Arimathaea (Joseus) and that folk-lore has changed the details as it fitted the story into the existing legend.

If Bran did surrender the Grail to Joseph, it is likely the sun-worshippers may have re-possessioned themselves of it after Joseph's death. There may well have been considerable rivalry between the two religions, with sacred objects being carried off and recovered. There is an Irish story of a lovely maiden (symbol of a glass Grail) who fled into a church but fell dead (i.e. was dropped and broken) in the church when a storming-party came to rescue her. Going the other way is a story of a monk in the Wildest Part of Britain (is this Glastonbury?) who lost a book; he had locked it in the altar tabernacle, from whence it had vanished, and he found it at Walecog, which is translated Norway, but could mean Celtic Hole - Wookey Hole! It is likely that it was not until Arthur's time that the pre-Christian cult was broken up. Arthur may also have joined battle against the cult of Mithras, a development of sun-god worship containing a caricature of the Last Supper and the Ascension. It is believed there

was a temple of Mithras close to Glastonbury at Beckery.

We must remember that Glastonbury was *spiritually* an island: an isolated islet of Christianity far out in the sea of heathendom where pagan rites still held sway although most of the bloodthirstiness had gone out of them. When St. Augustine arrived a few years after Arthur's death he believed the whole country to be pagan and was surprised to find this Christian outpost. But Arthur appears to have been a Christian, of that powerful faith we saw in chapter 3, and was determined to stamp out the evil practices around him - and presumably to obtain possession of the pagans' talismans and hand them over to the Christian Church. The "High History" tells us Arthur's knights were sent to end certain evil customs - and here, not twenty miles from Camelot, was the chief centre of sun-worship and entrance to Hades!

It is noteworthy in the various versions how the first visit to the Fisher King's hall is fruitless because the hero fails to ask the question. Then a "loathly damsel" comes to Arthur's court upbraiding the hero and telling him that if he had asked about the service of the Grail his quest would have succeeded. Do we see, lurking in the shadows of the cave, an old crone who has lived there for years - maybe not an initiate, but some say she has been indwelt by the goddess so no-one dares put her out - and eventually she turns king's evidence and goes to Camelot where she tells the hero the secrets he needs to know? Presumably she played him false in the end, for in "Mabinogion" we are told Arthur chopped her in half. What appears to be her skeleton was discovered in the cave; the right femur (thigh-bone) was twenty feet from the main part of her skeleton. With her were her goats, sacrificial knife, and a bogus spherical Grail which would never have set fire to anything: it was not made of glass but carved from a lump of stalagmite! (It is admitted however that such a solid - but shiny - "crystal ball" would have fulfilled the function of concentrating the witch's attention sufficiently for her to pass by self-hypnosis into a trance, in which she would no

doubt be able to utter tidings strange and wondrous.)

So the witch was killed and Christian exorcists cleansed the place. One wonders if it is possible that Arthur (or one of his knights) was the last "divine youth" after being initiated and obtaining the Grail by means of the information given him by the hag. Arthur became a legendary sun-god by some means or other, and the old belief (after his death in battle) that he only sleeps and some day will re-awaken, is maybe a relic of a hope that the old sun-worship would be restored.

In "Beowulf", where we have the same legend with a Norse flavour, the hero will not submit to being killed at the end of his term of office, and kills his assailant.

Some suggest that the final exorcist (an unknown Glastonbury monk) was Dunstan, and point out how several French and German writers suddenly took the Grail legend as their theme within a few years after Dunstan had spent two years at the court of the Count of Flanders. Indeed de Troyes claimed he received the story from this Count.

So: Bran in the first century, Arthur in the fifth and sixth, Dunstan in the tenth: the legend seems to include stories from them all.

Finally we must make mention of Mrs. K.E.Maltwood's "A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars", which gives the "High History" a detailed Zodiac connection which is arousing interest in some quarters at the present time - but this must wait until the next chapter.

THE ARTHURIAN STORY UP TO DATE

In 1190 the monks dug in the abbey grounds at the reputed site of Arthur's grave. Seven feet down, they came to a gravestone with a leaden cross, reading (in Latin) "Here lies buried the renowned King Arthur in the Isle of Avalon". Though the cross was lost about the eighteenth century, there seems no doubt it did exist: a seventeenth-century drawing of it survives.

Sixteen feet down, the monks came upon a coffin, hollowed from the trunk of an oak, containing the bones of a very large man – several inches taller than the tallest of the monks. A woman's bones were there too. One tradition says that as the coffin was opened the blonde-haired Guinevere's face was seen in all its beauty for a moment, before the influx of air caused her to wither into dust. Another says an imprudent monk jumped down into the grave to caress the golden hair, but it crumbled to nothingness at his touch.

Cynics see the finding of these remains as a clever publicity trick at a time when the abbey was in urgent need of funds (it was six years after the great abbey fire) and claim that the leaden cross was a fake; but Giraldus Cambrensis, who wrote within four years after the discovery, reported the find as genuine, and appears to have inspected the bones. His other writings show him as a chronicler unlikely to give a favourable report unless convinced.

Whether true or falsified, the two skeletons were then placed in a shrine in the great abbey church which was in course of being rebuilt after the fire. The fragmentary remains of this shrine were discovered in 1934 and the spot is marked in the turf.

The finding of what appear to have been Arthur's bones is far from sufficient to destroy the expectation that Arthur will return. Some believe that his spirit is waiting in Avalon – maybe a mystic Avalon, which may or may not be the same as Annwn the abode of the dead which is said to be approached through the Tor. Some believe he will return to earth, on the Tor. Others seem to await the return of Jesus Christ on the Tor. Why Christ should choose the Tor is hard to see but we will look for an answer to this question in chapter 7. I wonder whether in some minds there is confusion – or even fusion – of the true God in Jesus with an immortalised Arthur.

In 1348 the Order of the Garter was founded by King Edward III in succession to the knighthood of the Round Table.

Some say Arthur and his knights ride the clouds even now and that at certain times their hoofbeats can be heard (here is the Wild Hunt again) setting the dogs barking though nothing is to be seen...

In 1972 a midsummer-night vigil was held at Cadbury Camp to await the sound of the hooves. Was anything heard? The night was subsequently reported in the Glastonbury magazine "Torc" in the following words:- *"We built a large fire and sat on till the dawn mists rolled over the surrounding hills. Did we hear the hoofbeats of Arthur's men? I don't know, but I haven't been quite the same since..."*

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A crystal cross (containing apparently a Grail crystal jewel) at the abbey was known to the fourteenth-century writer John of Glastonbury. As this cross was not on the list of booty carried off by Henry VIII, and there were no intervening disasters between John's time and Henry's, it may be that this cross lies buried somewhere in the abbey grounds to this day.

CHAPTER 5

LEY LINE AND VESICA, ZODIAC AND LABYRINTH

We have read some strange tales; stranger ones are yet to come. If you ask a typical visitor to Glastonbury what he knows of the legends, he may tell you a certain amount about the Joseph stories and the Arthurian tales: it is much less likely (unless he is a hippy) that he will be able to tell you about ley lines or the *vesica piscis*; or the Somerset zodiac or the Tor labyrinth. It is to these matters that we now turn.

Much of the information in the early part of this chapter comes from "Glastonbury - a Study in Patterns" published by the Research into Lost Knowledge Organisation. Let us begin with a quotation from that publication.

"In former times every sacred building was both sited and planned according to a remarkable system of natural magic, a tradition of extreme antiquity, surviving from the archaic world which preceded the resurgence of civilisation in Egypt and the construction of the Great Pyramid."

The author of the quotation then goes on to tell how a great secret, unknown to modern science, was known to the ancient alchemist: he could bring about the fusion of terrestrial current and solar energy. There are, we are told, streams of terrestrial current which the ancients, through knowledge now lost, were able to collect and store; then at the right moment the spark of solar energy or atmospheric electricity was called down to animate the collected terrestrial current which thereupon returned from its accumulators into the ground, giving fertility to the land. (Of course, on page 66 we saw one singularly unmagical theory of how this fusion of solar energy and terrestrial force took place!)

Thus Stonehenge was built to a hidden plan for the purpose of conducting the solar spark to the terrestrial current collected in its man-made accumulator Silbury Hill (though Silbury Hill is believed also to have served the Druids as a sort of gigantic sun-dial, and may additionally have had other purposes) - and Stonehenge's successor Glastonbury Abbey was built on the same ley line (a ley line being, to followers of these theories, an underground stream of terrestrial current) and to the same secret plan, to bring the solar spark to the current in that natural accumulator, Glastonbury Tor. In Egypt the two functions were combined in Cheops' Great Pyramid which is both conductor and accumulator.

The reader may feel by this time that his powers of credulity are being severely strained, but let us not dismiss the matter before seeing what these strange ley lines and hidden plan may have been.

LEY LINES

Glastonbury is said to be the crossing-point of several major ley lines. One (which is also a *lung mei* - a line allegedly frequented by a dragon) stretches from St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall to Avebury in Wiltshire, and possibly on again until reaching the east coast on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk. Another runs from Glastonbury through Stonehenge to Canterbury - as is shown by Glastonbury Abbey, Stonehenge and Canterbury Cathedral being in an exactly straight line.

I would never be prepared to accept a statement that these three edifices are in a perfectly straight line without checking it, so I carried out a little research. By mathematics, working on the Ordnance Survey grid numbers, it seemed the line could not be straight, though the discrepancy was so slight as to leave me dissatisfied. The only way I could satisfy myself was to join together all the Ordnance Survey sheets (one inch to one mile) from Somerset to Kent, stretch a piece of cotton from Canterbury Cathedral to Glastonbury Abbey,

and see whether it cut Stonehenge. It was not until I began to join the maps together that I realised there were nine of them and I did not have a room long enough to lay them end to end!

A couple of hours later I had the maps laid out all across the bedroom, through the door and along the landing. The maps moved on the carpet so I took it up (*nothing was going to stop me now!*) and fixed them all to the floor with drawing pins. I checked that they were joined together exactly, and then - *moment of climax* - I stretched my 25ft. length of cotton from Canterbury Cathedral to Glastonbury Abbey. It missed Stonehenge by 0.73 of an inch, i.e. nearly three quarters of a mile. It seemed the theory was wrong.

But then I noticed that the $51^{\circ} 20'$ line of latitude, which runs about ten miles north of Stonehenge, did not appear straight on the map. I stretched my cotton from the $51^{\circ} 20'$ mark north of Canterbury to the similar mark north of Glastonbury and discovered that the intermediate marks did not coincide but made a great curve. (The Ordnance Survey map is evidently not on Mercator's projection.) North of Stonehenge, the discrepancy between my cotton and the true $51^{\circ} 20'$ line was 0.78 of an inch. So I re-drew my line from Canterbury Cathedral to Glastonbury Abbey, making this correction. My new line cut the extreme south edge of the Stonehenge circle, missing the centre of the circle by one twentieth of an inch. I am prepared to admit that this error is probably mine and not the designer's. So: Canterbury Cathedral, Stonehenge and Glastonbury Abbey are in one straight line. Why this is so, or how this was brought about centuries ago, I cannot say. some will say, "Coincidence".

At this point I turned my attention to the second major ley line through Glastonbury: the exactly straight line formed by a string of elevated churches dedicated to St. Michael: one at Avebury, one on top of the Tor, one on top of King Alfred's fort at Burrowbridge (ten miles south-west of Glastonbury)

St. Michael's Mount near Penzance in Cornwall, and others. I repeated my cotton-stretching experiment along the Avebury-to-Burrowbridge section of this line and was not particularly surprised to find that the result was a straight line through Glastonbury Tor.

How could such lines possibly have come into existence? I think the theory of Mr. Alfred Watkins, who rediscovered the ley system in the early years of this century, is probably the likeliest answer. The theory runs, generally speaking, as follows.

Let us imagine Britain at some time in the Stone Age. No towns or villages - we are looking many centuries prior to the building of the Glastonbury Lake Villages. Even Stonehenge had not been built.

Men exist - just a few of them in scattered tribes here and there. Man is a hunter with a weapon of flint.

The land is open country, generally free from trees, for the last Ice Age has only recently ended: the forests of England are not yet sprung up.

Depending on what part of the country he lives in, our prehistoric friend - let's call him Ug - may have to go some distance to find flints, or to obtain that other necessity for him, salt. Later he discovers the art of making clay pots, and journeyings to fetch clay are added to his way of life.

Let us suppose our friend Ug is in charge of a party being sent by his tribe on a journey of - say - a hundred miles to fetch flints, salt, or clay. He has nothing to fear from other tribes, for the land is peaceable. (War is a relatively civilised institution aimed primarily at acquiring your opponents' land or goods; and ownership of property is a concept which in Ug's day had not been thought of. Ug claimed ownership of no land - except possibly his own private cave - for he had not learnt to till the soil or to grow crops. Trade and even barter were still in the future.)

Ug's chief concern therefore is how to reach his destination and how to find his way back. His best way is to make a bee-line for a prominent hill in approximately the right direction, and when he reaches the top of it he will pick out another hilltop, until his destination comes in sight.

Even in today's smoke-polluted atmosphere it is possible to see for sixty miles from a hilltop on a clear day. Standing on Glastonbury Tor not long ago I was able to pick out the hills of Exmoor beyond Minehead to the west, the Welsh Mountains across the Bristol Channel to the north-west, and Cley Hill near Warminster (Wilts) to the east.

So Ug will choose a hilltop about fifty to sixty miles away if there is one, and will set off, fording streams, climbing ridges and crossing valleys. In the valleys he might temporarily lose sight of the high hill at which he aimed, so it was worth while erecting stones here and there to mark the way for next time. If two paths crossed, a stone was placed to mark the crossing. In due course, tumuli were often erected where a path surmounted a ridge, to stand out against the skyline. The name given to these old straight tracks is "leys".

Lifetimes passed. Man developed from a hunter to a farmer. He built his little round huts, which became the first villages, alongside the leys. When neighbouring tribes became hostile, he built camps adjoining the leys where they crossed the easily-fortified hilltop points.

As man came to know his geography, he gradually began to travel between villages by easier routes avoiding steep places and marshy spots, instead of using the old direct leys. The forest began to encroach on the lesser-used old routes: the ley system was in decline. Before it ended the Romans took advantage of it in laying out some of their military roads.

Long before the coming of the Romans, the mark stones at the crossings of the leys had become the centres at which the villagers met for their trade, their courts, their religious ceremonies and other events. The stones were now ancient and (their origins forgotten) they became surrounded with superstitious awe. More than a thousand years B.C. the original ley-men (the surveyors who set out the ley) had been supplanted by astronomer-priests. Circles such as that at Stonehenge were erected on the leys, laid out to align with the point over which the sun rose on Midsummer Day. New leys were set out aiming not at flint or salt sources but at the midsummer sunrise. By the time of the Glastonbury Lake Villages the astronomer-priests had in turn been succeeded by the Druids, who remained a powerful force until practically wiped out under Roman rule. Sometimes pagan temples were erected over or in the place of mark stones.

The Christian era dawned. Christian churches were built astride the leys at the sacred points in place of the temples or mark stones.

After the departure of the Romans in the fifth century A.D. the ley system was finally forgotten, but the crossing points continued to be used as the traditional gathering places. At some there were churches; at others fairs and markets met and a market cross was erected on the mark stone. Villages grew around such spots.

It is even possible to find a church with doors on both sides of its tower, so that ley users could go through. The practice of building the church astride the ley sometimes gives rise to present-day difficulties: there are instances where busy main roads following the courses of leys head straight for a church and have to zig-zag round it in a hazardous manner. Alternatively the road may go through or under a church: one of the most notable examples is St. John's on the Wall in Bristol. This church (fig. 7) marks the crossing point of two leys. One of them comes from north of the River Avon and goes up Christmas Steps - a good example of how the

ley went straight up the hill whereas the later road took an easier route - while the other comes across the river where Bristol Bridge now stands and runs straight up Broad Street to the church. The ley crossing developed into a city-wall gateway, with the church on top of the wall, and is today a picturesque traffic-hazard.

Some would say that this physical aspect, straight trackways, is the only aspect of the ley system - and some would say that even this is complete fantasy. But others go further, speaking of straight lines of terrestrial force or earth-magnetism, and seeing the leys as streams of life-giving force (almost comparable to the veins on the back of a man's hand) which the ancients, primarily the people of Atlantis, had succeeded in harnessing. To introduce this idea let us take another quotation from the same source as that with which this chapter began:- *"The scientists of the ancient civilisation laid out the entire world according to the principles of a system whereby the natural flow of terrestrial magnetism was controlled and regulated. Stone circles and pillars were erected at magnetic centres, great mounds were built and hills hollowed out to accumulate the current, and tracks, causeways and linear earthworks were lined up on these ... to direct the flow of the terrestrial spirit into regular channels"*.

The lines are believed to impart vigour and well-being to living things upon them. Birds are said to follow them, and I have myself seen a flock of birds pass high over Glastonbury Abbey, apparently following the Stonehenge ley from east to west.

This force or spirit, say the devotees of the theory, has some connection with the earth's magnetic field, and it has been suggested that ancient man knew a method (now long forgotten) of controlling and using the earth's flow of magnetic energy, and of collecting it in giant accumulators such as Glastonbury Tor for his benefit. The subject is dealt with more fully in John Michell's "The View over Atlantis".



*Fig. 7. St. John's on the Wall, Bristol:
a Ley Crossing.*

Is this entirely far-fetched? John Michell points out traces of this system which are to be found in China, Africa, the South Sea Islands and Peru, and even among the Australian aboriginies. There seems to have been something more than a mere network of tracks ... something we of the twentieth century do not comprehend. He outlines the design to which the interior chamber of the "accumulator" might have been made, and in support of the magnetic-current theory he points out that the "Aubrey Holes" round Stonehenge are arranged in such a way that they can be used to predict eclipses of the moon. Why should prehistoric man want to know of eclipses of the moon? - Because (*it is a scientific fact*) an eclipse of the moon temporarily upsets the earth's magnetism.

Give your imagination a flight of fancy for a moment and suppose - just suppose - that the ancients could harness this earth-magnetism in such a way as to neutralise the earth's gravity. Modern science cannot satisfactorily explain how the men of thousands of years ago transported the massive stones to Stonehenge from many miles away. But if they could use the earth's magnetism to neutralise the force of gravity, we can picture them flying a giant stone along a ley line in a state of weightlessness! - And then suddenly an unforeseen eclipse upsets the magnetism and the stone crashes, scattering the ley-men in all directions!

The question arises of whether ley lines (assuming they exist) are physical or spiritual. If there are streams of earth-magnetism which the scientists have overlooked and which provide potential anti-gravitational routes or anything else beneficial to mankind, then let us discover them. But if they are some aspect of occultism - psychical instead of physical - let us leave them alone. Occultism (magic, etc.) has inherent dangers - and this is something else of which many people seem unaware today.

If all this is fantasy - and maybe it seems too strange to be anything else - we are still left with

the question: how *did* a band of so-called cave men manage to build Stonehenge and accurately predict eclipses of the moon?

A further theory connects ley lines with UFOs - i.e. "unidentified flying objects", sometimes known as flying saucers. Although Glastonbury is not known as a UFO centre, Cley Hill at Warminster (a town noted for a large number of UFO sightings) can be seen on a clear day from the top of Glastonbury Tor, and the inevitable theory that the top of the Tor is a landing-ground for spacecraft has been put forward. The belief is held by some that the ley lines are UFO flight-paths, and the stone circles etc. at certain ley centres act as "Signposts". There is said to be a ley line through Warminster parallel to the Glastonbury-Stonehenge ley which runs about five miles south of the town.

UFOs and parallel leys seem to have some connection. A pattern of parallel leys has been observed to correspond with a series of UFO sightings at various spots in the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells area of Kent.

The beings in the UFOs today hold themselves aloof, in view of the state of our world, but in remote times (the theory alleges) they were in contact with primitive earthmen, and the leys and stone circles were set out under their guidance. UFOs have been observed to travel in a straight line and then to change height with a toppling motion over a ley centre and depart at an immense speed in a different direction.

These ideas have fairly close connections with the theories set out in such books as Erich von Däniken's "Chariots of the Gods?" that beings from space visited our planet in remote times. Part of these speculations includes a theory that manifestations of God or His angelic messengers in the Old Testament as seen by such men as Moses (*Exodus* 33, 20-23) Lot (*Genesis* 19, 1) Elijah (*2 Kings* 11, 11) and Ezekiel (*Ezekiel* 1, 4-28) were really visits to earth by highly-civilised space-travellers who appeared godlike to the primitive humans.

In "Chariots of the Gods?" von Däniken concedes that even if a case were made out for explaining certain Old Testament references by UFOs, there is still some Being - the Creator - far superior to the beings who stepped out of the spaceships. Nevertheless, some people go somewhat further, giving the impression that the One the Old Testament Israelites worshipped - and the One that Christians worship today - as Almighty God was in fact just the leader of the spacemen. They claim from *Ezekiel 1, 4-28*, for example, that Ezekiel saw God come down in a helicopter. Opinions are argued back and forth as to whether Ezekiel had a vision (if so, it was a strange one) or whether God or His messengers adopted an unusually-physical form and actually came in the strange vehicle the prophet describes, or whether space-visitors landed in front of Ezekiel and he thought they were divine messengers. The crux of the question is: do we see here divine Beings looking like spacemen, or spacemen looking like divine Beings.

It is worth noting that these visitors instructed Ezekiel to proclaim warning prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem - and this disaster in fact took place in Ezekiel's lifetime. They also caused him to prophesy that God would make a new covenant with His people - and this was fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah, Christ, some centuries later. So, although for convenience we will call them "space-travellers", it seems these visitors were from God: divine Beings looking like spacemen.

Incidentally these visitors also gave Ezekiel various prophecies to deliver in connection with Armageddon and the coming of the Millennium: as their predictions regarding Jerusalem and the Messiah were fulfilled, one assumes these too will be fulfilled. Theories on Christ's Second Coming and the Millennium which is to follow it have one or two odd connections with Glastonbury - now and then one meets people in Glastonbury who are there because they believe the Second Coming will take place on the Tor - and this matter will merit a few paragraphs of attention in chapter 7. But for the present let us return to our

theme of ley lines.

(Nevertheless let us keep those "space-travellers" in mind, so that we shall not be taken by surprise if we meet them in Glastonbury later in this chapter.)

The two ley lines which have been described in this section (the Stonehenge and Canterbury ley and the St. Michael's Mount ley) are by no means the only leys in Glastonbury. Apparent traces of others can be seen, on the Ordnance Survey map and on the ground. Someone has put forward a theory that there is a giant "astronomical clock" composed of ley lines radiating at 15° intervals, based on Dundon Camp five miles south of Glastonbury.

Occasionally a line will reveal itself when least expected. Driving past the shoe factory on my way from Street to Glastonbury one day I noticed that the two Glastonbury church towers were in line and the road was heading straight towards them. The next day I joined the two towers and the stretch of road with a pencil line on the Ordnance Survey map. Extending my line to the north-east I found nothing, but going south-west the line went straight through two more church towers at Walton and Thornfalcon. This ley is the line E-F-G in fig. 1, and if the lines B-G and D-E are drawn in, the result is the equilateral triangles B-F-G and D-E-F; an equilateral triangle being one-half of a *vesica piscis* as we shall see in the next section of this chapter.

A modicum of commonsense must be used in ley-hunting. A straight line from Glastonbury Tor to the Hinkley Point nuclear power station goes directly through Glastonbury gasworks (three power-points!) but this is no proof of a ley line!

Tracing a ley on the ground is not as difficult as might be expected, once one has made a start. Take for example the ley from Glastonbury Tor down to Cornwall. If we climb Burrow Mump (King Alfred's fort at Burrowbridge, ten miles south-west of Glastonbury) which is on the ley, we can obtain a clear view of Glastonbury Tor. We can erect two staffs (broomsticks are excellent) about ten feet apart, in

line with the Tor. If we then stand with our backs to the Tor and look along the line of the staffs, they show us the position where the ley crosses the horizon down in south Somerset. Then we can go to that point, erect our two staffs there to line up with Burrow Mump, and use them to find the next point, down Devonshire way.

The ley-men knew refinements of the two-staff system whereby they could find a straight line between two points which were not in sight of each other. For instance a straight line between two points on opposite sides of the Mendip Hills could be set out by a ley-man using two staffs on top of Mendip. The method is shown in fig. 8:-

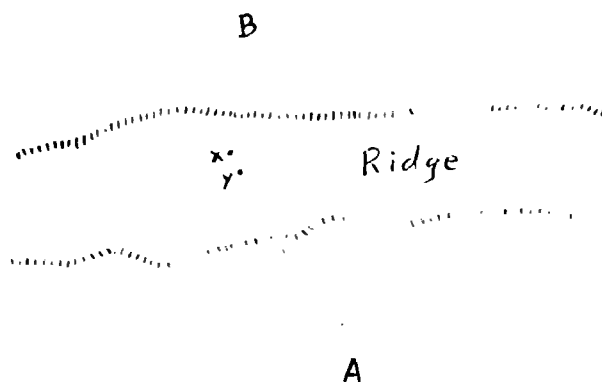


Fig. 8. Setting out a Ley.

In this diagram the ley-man is trying to find the straight line between points A and B, which are hidden from each other by the ridge. His staffs X and Y are in line with A but not with B. So he will move staff X until the staffs align with B. They will then not align with A so he will move staff Y. Eventually he will reach the point where they align with both A and B, and his line is then straight. This may be how some long-distance leys were set out.

Possibly this semi-secret ability to construct a

straight line from one side of a hill to the other has given rise to the legends which exist in various counties of secret passages through hills. There is a myth that there is a secret underground corridor from Glastonbury Abbey to the top of the Tor (two points which are hidden from each other by the intervening eminence of Chalice Hill) which may have come from this source. On the other hand some of the rumours of underground ways to and from ancient buildings in Glastonbury are true: small stretches of some of these passages still exist.

One can imagine the ley-men, confronted by inquisitive onlookers, finding it more convenient to drop mysterious hints about "a secret passage" than to reveal the true nature of their work.

Among the primitive tribespeople the skilled ley-men would have been able to claim a considerable measure of authority. The present-day surveyor's staff, the magician's wand, Aaron's rod which budded (*Numbers chapter 17 verse 18*) and the wand of authority carried by Black Rod and others on ceremonial occasions, are all said to have their source in the ley-man's staff.

I do not enjoy hunting ley lines. There are so many sites of antiquities in the Glastonbury area and on Mendip that I am left hopelessly confused. But, whatever we choose to think about the ley system, whether we determine to believe that the leys were travelled by cave-man or Druid, or fiery dragon or fertilising current or spacecraft, or whether we reject the whole concept, the fact remains that three notable worship-centres, Glastonbury Abbey, Stonehenge and Canterbury Cathedral, together with some lesser sites of antiquities, seem to have been deliberately sited along a 150 mile straight line.

THE VESICA PISCIS

It was alleged at the beginning of this chapter that sacred buildings were in former times both sited and planned according to "natural magic", and we have now seen how there might - just might - be more involved in the siting of Glastonbury Abbey than we now know. Let us now turn our minds to the planning - the design of the abbey, and in particular the design of the St. Mary's chapel round which the oldest and most sacred traditions are centred.

It is known - from Caesariano's Commentary published in 1592 - that the overall length and breadth of a sacred structure in ancient times was based on the *vesica piscis* or fish-bladder - so called because of its shape. The symbolism of this shape is complicated, coming from Christian and Hindu sources and possibly others; but the shape itself is simple. It is formed by drawing two circles of equal size, the centre of the one being on the circumference of the other: thus:-

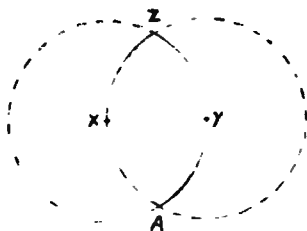


Fig. 10.

Incidentally, if the triangle X-Y-Z were drawn, it would be found to be equilateral: this is a quick way of drawing an equilateral triangle - as shown in fig. 11.



Fig. 11.

Let us develop our drawing. Opening our compasses to make A-Z our radius, we will draw two more circles using A and Z as our centres. This gives us a second vesica at right angles to the first:-

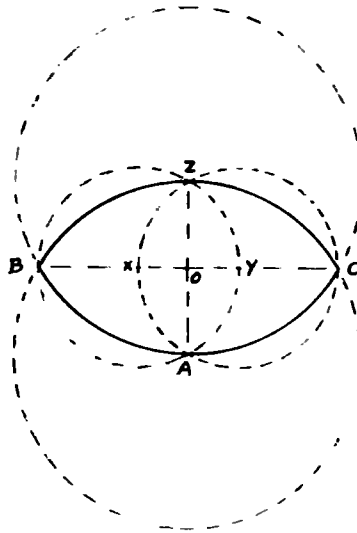


Fig. 12.

I have also marked the centre-point O, where the lines A-Z and X-Y cross.

Now for our third vesica. We will extend our compasses again, to make B-C our new radius, but this third vesica is to run the same way as the second. Extending the line A-Z gives us our points, D and E: they are easy to find because O-C is the same as O-D and O-E. And so we have our third vesica:-

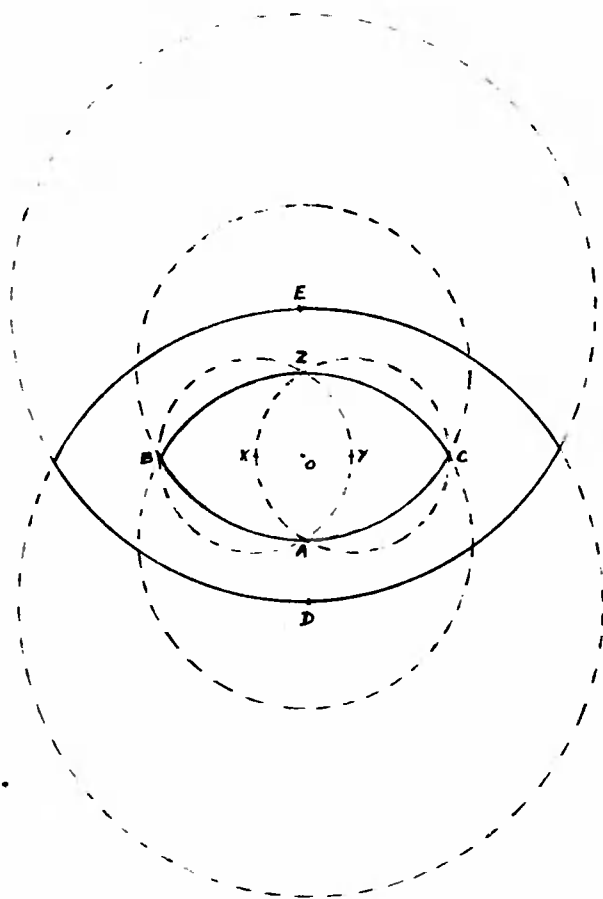


Fig. 13.

We also have the exterior length and width, and the interior width, of St. Mary's chapel:-

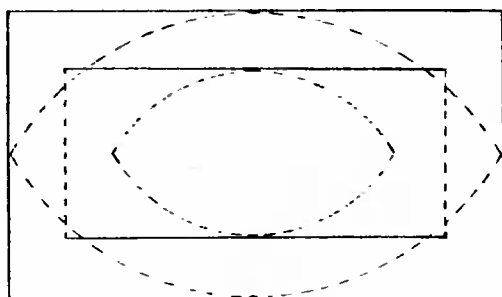


Fig. 14.

It does not show the interior length, nor the four bays into which the interior is divided. Can a development of our drawing show this? Yes: let us go back to that little vesica with which we started. Five of these in a row gives us our marks for the interior length and for the four bays:-

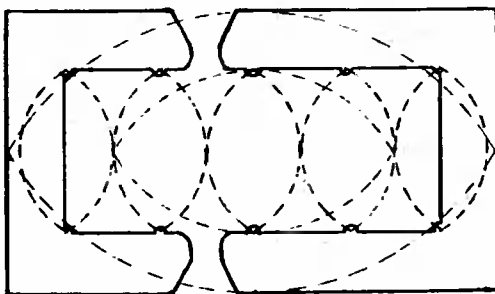


Fig. 15.

The rectangle forming the chapel is what is known as a $\sqrt{3}$ rectangle. One of the properties of such a rectangle is that it fits exactly into a hexagon: see fig. 16.

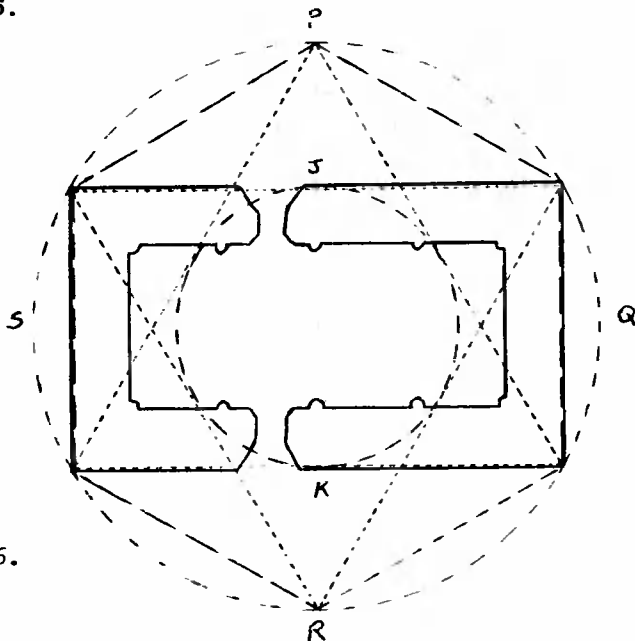


Fig. 16.

Another of its properties is that the radius of the circle into which it fits (P-Q-R-S in fig. 16) is exactly twice the radius of the circle (J-K) which fits inside the rectangle. The circle J-K (or the smaller circle which appears in fig. 21) is believed to be the ground on which the original wattle church stood.

The wattle church was probably a round structure: the reference in chapter 2 to Joseph of Arimathea having been buried near its southern corner is no barrier to this. The original Latin describing his place of burial is "*juxta meridianum angulum oratorii*" which could mean "near the meridian (i.e. southern) angle of the church", but alternatively the words "*meridianum angulum*" might refer to the meridian angle from the sun (i.e. the south) and have no reference to any angle of the wall: thus the meaning could be "near the meridian angle (i.e. more or less due south) of the church". A traditional east-facing church of course does not have a southern corner; it has south-east and south-west corners. Therefore if "*meridianum angulum*" describes the angle or direction from the church to the midday sun, and not the angle of a wall, then this passage (from Melkin, of course!) gives us no clue as to whether the wall near which Joseph was buried was straight, circular, or a corner.

The pattern of vesicas which we have seen extends to cover the whole abbey - and even further: see the street plan of Glastonbury (fig. 1) for a vesica from the market cross to the abbey fishpond which in turn forms part of a larger pattern covering most of central Glastonbury.

It is said that the constructing of ecclesiastical buildings on a pattern of vesicas and associated shapes had a symbolic message. Just as the robes of the High Anglican and Roman Catholic priesthood have symbolic meanings (meanings which were in some cases denounced by the Puritans, resulting in a controversy which still lives on in the Church of England today) so the proportions of the buildings are also believed to have had meanings, which are now forgotten. And as we have seen, there are people who believe these buildings were

designed as the instruments to bring the solar spark to the terrestrial current in a nearby "accumulator".

Perhaps there is some forgotten significance in the proportions of the buildings, after all. Maybe we really have lost knowledge which our forefathers possessed. It seems that somewhere in all this may be the secret of why most Norman and Gothic architecture looks "right", while so much Victorian pseudo-Gothic and twentieth-century architecture looks somehow "wrong".

If dry sand is sprinkled on a violin's sound-box, the box's vibrations will cause the sand to form patterns related to the sound-wavelengths. Similarly these ground-patterns of ley lines and vesicas have their wavelengths. Much modern planning and design - like much modern music - is "bad vibrations".

There is a fable that a powder found in the ruins of Glastonbury abbey in Elizabethan times was heated in a warming-pan and turned part of the pan to gold - but the recipe seems to have been lost. I am inclined to wonder whether this tale might stem from a tale of a legendary long-gone "golden age" whose secret has been lost.

There is some evidence that the Great Pyramid was the centre-point of an intercontinental system based on vesicas and ley lines, Glastonbury being a small part of this system.

There are other patterns too connected with vesicas: patterns of numbers. In ancient times sacred buildings, including Stonehenge, Cheops' Great Pyramid and (later) Glastonbury abbey, were designed with reference to a square of "natural magic" which is known as the Magic Square of the Sun. In this square (set out below) the numbers 1-36 are arranged in such a way that each column (vertical or horizontal) adds up to 111 - so do the diagonals - and the total of the whole square is the symbolic solar number 666. The perimeter adds up to 370, and various

groups of four numbers (such as the four at the centre, and the four corners) add up to 74. Try it by adding together the four squares *a-a-a-a*, *b-b-b-b*, or any of the other seven symmetrical groups of four up to *i-i-i-i*.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 6 _c | 32 _j | 3 _e | 34 _e | 35 _d | 1 _c |
| 7 _g | 11 _b | 27 _f | 28 _f | 8 _b | 30 _g |
| 19 _h | 14 _i | 16 _a | 15 _a | 23 _i | 24 _h |
| 18 _h | 20 _i | 22 _a | 21 _a | 17 _i | 13 _h |
| 25 _g | 29 _b | 10 _f | 9 _f | 26 _b | 12 _g |
| 36 _c | 5 _d | 33 _e | 4 _e | 2 _d | 31 _c |

Without going into detail, let us look at both Stonehenge and Glastonbury Abbey bearing in mind those figures - 36 - 666 - 370 and 74.

The units of measurement which are important here are the foot and the yard (which is why students of these matters have spoken strongly against the "arbitrary" and "materialistic" metric system) and also a unit of measurement known to have been used in ancient times, the Megalithic Yard, 2.72ft.

Stonehenge, laid out with reference to this magic square, has, I am told, a circumference around the outer bank of 370 Megalithic Yards. Let us take the North and South Barrows (between which the stone circles stand) as two corners of a rectangle. If we draw this rectangle, at right angles to the line from the Heel Stone by the main road to the Altar Stone (this being the midsummer sunrise line) we shall find it measures 90 x 40 Megalithic Yards, which gives it an area of 3,600 square Megalithic Yards, 26,640 square feet.

If we multiply this rectangle by 2.72 (which gives us an area of 26,640 Megalithic Yards) and place this over Glastonbury Abbey, interesting and surprising things happen.

The first surprise is that the abbey fits into this rectangle at all - but in fact the spiritual buildings (that is to say, abbey and cloisters but excluding the refectory etc.) fit into it remarkably well, as we shall see.

The second surprise is that we can go on playing with our numbers 36, 666, 370 and 74. The length of this rectangle into which we have fitted the abbey buildings is 666ft. and if we divide it into 36 squares (9 x 4) we shall find that the length of the sides of each square is 74ft.

At first it appeared that the buildings fitted into a smaller rectangle (8 x 4) but Frederick Bligh Bond, who first put forward the theory of the grid of thirty-six 74ft. squares, investigated; and thus in 1909 he discovered the buried foundations of the Edgar chapel forming an apse beyond the east wall of the main church. This is shown in fig. 17.

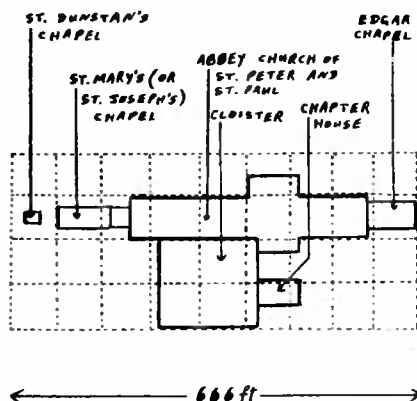


Fig. 17.

A word on Frederick Bligh Bond before we continue to look at numbers. Bond, a Bristol architect, started work on excavations in the abbey grounds in 1908 under the auspices of the Somerset Archaeological Society,

and one of his great discoveries was the buried foundations of the Edgar chapel.

In 1918 he published his book "The Gate of Remembrance" in which he claimed that much of his success had come through psychic research. According to Geoffrey Ashe's "King Arthur's Avalon", Bond used automatic writing to draw on the disembodied reminiscences of various monks at the abbey: as a result the then Dean of Wells and Chairman of the Abbey Trustees (Dean Armitage Robinson, author of "Two Glastonbury Legends" and other works) became anxious for Glastonbury's reputation and called a halt to the investigations.

Bond could scarcely expect the Church of England (which owns the abbey site) to be happy with his methods: many of its members would point to the prohibitions against this and other occult practices in (for example) Deuteronomy 18 verses 10-12. On the other hand much scope for further excavation (on normal archaeological - not psychic - principles) almost certainly exists.

Returning now to our numbers, one other number which has strange propensities is 3,168. John Michell in his book "City of Revelation" points out the following connections (among others) for this number:-

3,168 by gematria (the science of giving certain numerical values to each letter of the Greek alphabet: $\alpha = 1$; $\beta = 2$; $\iota = 10$; $\kappa = 20$; $\rho = 100$; $\sigma = 200$; etc.) represents the name "Lord Jesus Christ":-

$$\begin{array}{cccccccc}
 \kappa & \nu & \rho & \iota & \sigma & & \tilde{\iota} & \eta & \sigma & \sigma & \nu & \varsigma \\
 20+400+100+10+70+200 & + & 10+8+200+70+400+200 & + \\
 \chi & \epsilon & \iota & \sigma & \tau & \epsilon & \varsigma \\
 600+100+10+200+300+70+200 & = & 3,168.
 \end{array}$$

31,680 inches is half a mile.

31,680 feet (i.e. six miles) would be the perimeter of a square of land having the same area as the twelve hides granted by King Arviragus and his successors to Joseph of Arimathaea. (Taking a "hide" as 120 acres as found

in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book, I have checked this and found it correct.)

31,680 furlongs (3,960 miles) is the radius of the earth.

31,680,000 feet is (according to John Michell's theory) the true perimeter of the New Jerusalem described in the Book of Revelation.

316.8ft. is the perimeter of the square outside the circle round St. Mary's chapel (i.e. the square W-X-Y-Z in fig. 18) - incidentally this connects also with the number 666 which we noted earlier, for it is claimed that the circle P-Q-R-S in the same diagram has an area of 666 square Megalithic Yards.

316.8ft. is the circumference of the Sarsen stone circle at Stonehenge.

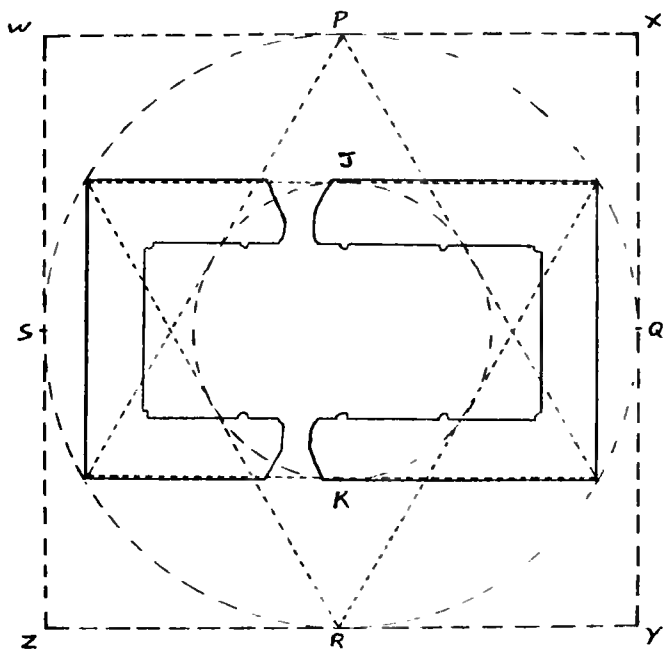


Fig. 18.
St. Mary's Chapel.

Thus the theory arises that in some forgotten way St. Mary's chapel and Stonehenge symbolise the eternal New Jerusalem.

Regarding the last two items in the above list, figs. 18 and 19, which are both drawn to the same scale, show correspondences between St. Mary's chapel and Stonehenge. The area of the inner stone circle (the Bluestone Circle) at Stonehenge has an area, I am told, of 666 square Megalithic Yards corresponding to the circle touching the four corners of St. Mary's chapel - i.e. the chapel would fit exactly within the bluestone circle. The main circle

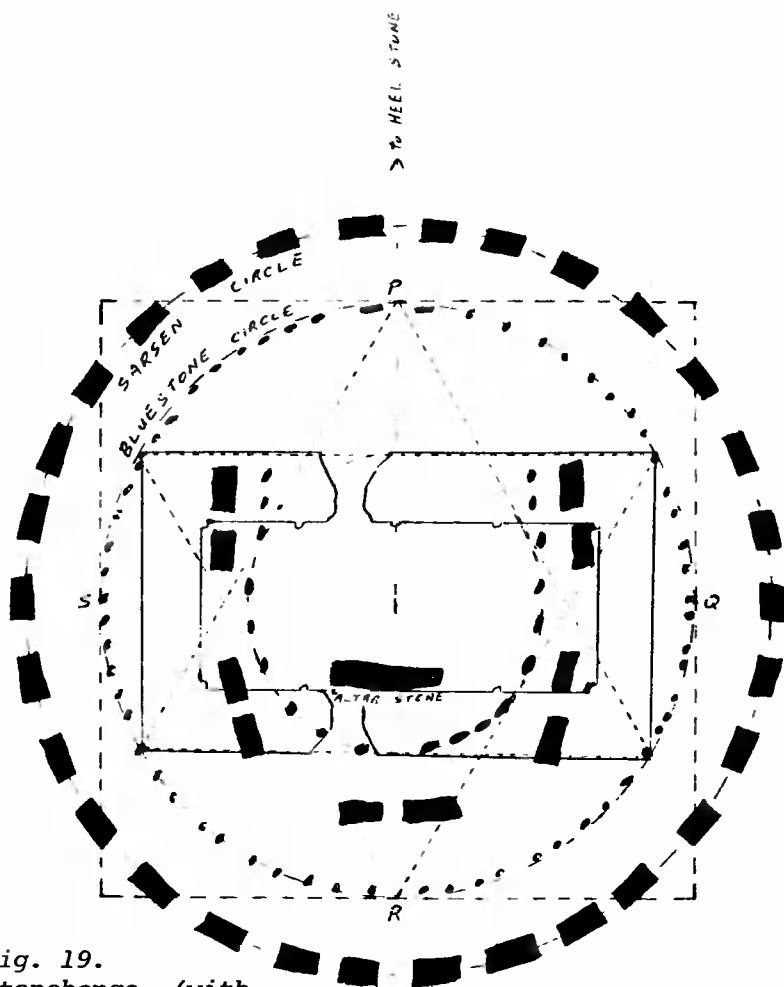


Fig. 19.
Stonehenge. (with
St. Mary's Chapel
indicated at the same scale)

(the Sarsen Circle) has an area of 888 square yards, which is (I am informed) 1,080 square Megalithic Yards - by gematria 888 is symbolic of Jesus (check it for yourself on page 101) and 1,080 the Holy Spirit.

checked:
it is
correct.

888, 1,080 and 666 can be shown to have their connections, like those shown for 3,168. And 888 is 74×12 , 74 being a number we saw in Bond's grid of the abbey, and in the magic square.

I find these matters somewhat baffling. I wish I could leave them there but there are one or two further problems.

At some stage in the Middle Ages, St. Mary's chapel was lengthened. (See fig. 20.) In the present ruin the first four bays, with the fine Norman windows, are the

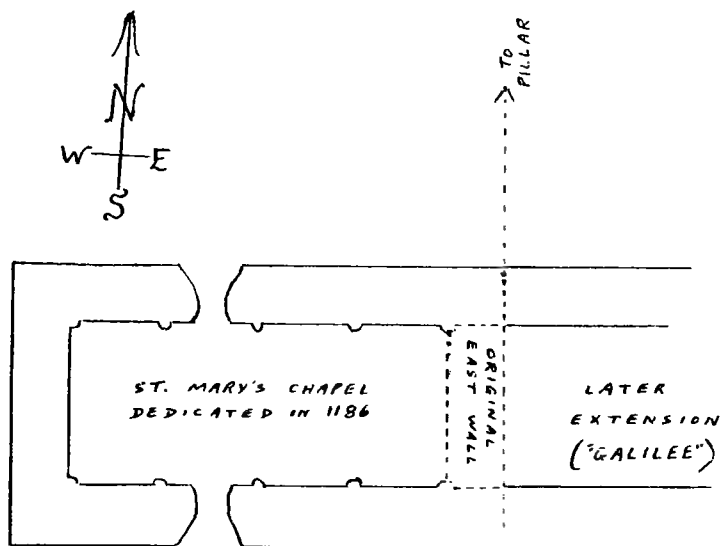


Fig. 20.

original 1186 building, as shown in fig. 6 on page 30, and the further bays with the Gothic windows are the extension known as the Galilee by which the chapel was joined on to the main abbey church. It is the chapel as built in 1186, not as later extended, which fits into the pattern of vesicas shown on fig. 15. But just how big was this chapel?

Somewhere, someone has blundered. We noted in chapter 2 (see page 23) how a column with a brass plate was erected marking the end of the original chapel and describing its original dimensions (internal) as: length 60ft., breadth 26ft., and stating that the centre of the column was 48ft. north of the middle point of the original east wall. (I shall refer to this column and brass plate, for convenience, as the mediaeval pillar and plate.) These dimensions give a structure whose exterior is a $\sqrt{3}$ rectangle: five small vesicas fit into it as in fig. 15, so we can calculate the external measurements by drawing the larger vesicas. But the result of this exercise is: external length 77.7ft., width 45.5ft., which does not correspond with the measurements given by John Michell in "City of Revelation", namely external length 68.6ft., width 39.6ft. (These figures too give a $\sqrt{3}$ rectangle.)

So: either (i) the mediaeval measurements are too long, or (ii) John Michell's measurements are too short, or (iii) the thickness of the walls is not as shown in the vesica diagrams (in which case the whole vesica theory is in danger) or (iv) the measurements do not make the right allowance for alcoves and/or buttresses and so the whole comparison is a waste of time. From drawings made by a Rev. Willis (architectural researcher and Cambridge University professor) in 1866, it appears to me that Mr. Michell is right; but one solution might be for someone to go down to the abbey with a tape-measure...

Although the ruins are open to the public, one has no right to run around taking measurements without first obtaining the permission of the trustees. In view of my purpose (stated on page 7) of setting out the stories without delving deeply into the evidence for or against them, I shall leave the fetching of the tape-measure to someone else. I shall content myself with sitting on the

grass at the spot where the mediaeval pillar once stood. Its location is marked in the turf. I shall relax in the knowledge that the chapel facing me is probably the most holy spot in England and is the mother-church in this land of the faith which gives me my salvation for eternity - but I shall be conscious that beneath the spot where I am sitting lies our next problem.

In "Britain - a Study in Patterns" (companion volume to "Glastonbury - a Study in Patterns") we hear of a pillar erected by St. David in the sixth century A.D., and are told that Bligh Bond's excavations disclosed its foundations in 1921 "some 29ft. north of the eastern wall of the wooden rectangular church whose measures had been precisely those of the Temple of Solomon, and as such regarded with deep reverence".

Did David erect a pillar? Possibly he did, for we know that he erected a new church: possibly this was an adjunct to the wattle church and he wanted to preserve the boundary of the most holy. But let us see where Bond dug. "29ft. north of the east wall of the wooden church". What church was this? The wattle church? David's church? St. Mary's chapel? - There was only one church held to be special in the sixth century, and that was the wattle church. So - if that is the church referred to - we see here the *probably-circular church of wattle* which was revered for its connection with *Christ*, transformed into an *oblong church of wood* revered for its connection with *Solomon's Temple*! Most confusing. In any case the measurements do not seem to correspond: Solomon's Temple was 60 x 20 cubits, about 90 x 30 feet, which is nothing like a $\sqrt{3}$ rectangle.

It may be that Bond in his communications with his disembodied monks or whatever they were received information as to an oblong wooden church of which I am unaware. But as he took his measurements from a rectangular church, let us do the same. There is only one such church we can work from, and that is the present St. Mary's chapel. Let us measure 29ft. north

from the original east wall.

The mediaeval pillar was 48ft. north of the centre-point of this wall, as we saw on page 23. John Michell gives us the length of the wall as 39.6ft., so by simple subtraction we find that the mediaeval pillar was 28.2ft. north of the corner. Bond's dig would have taken him right onto it.

Having found remains, Bond dug deeper and uncovered very ancient foundations 7ft. in diameter. Had there been two pillars? But 7ft. seems a huge diameter for a column which was not built to support anything. Dean Armitage Robinson in "Two Glastonbury Legends" dismisses the find as only the base of a column, but in "Britain - a Study in Patterns" it is suggested that it may be the site of one of the ancient hermitage cells. (In chapter 2 we saw the hermits living at the foot of the Tor, but it is not unreasonable to assume that in due course they or their successors moved to the abbey site, where, if the legend is true, the wattle church already stood.) Bond's find agreed with his theory that the hermits' cells stood in a ring around the wattle church. We are told its position coincided with the ring Bond had already theoretically drawn - but for me this only leads to further difficulties. One of the illustrations in "Britain - a Study in Patterns" shows this ring of cells in the position shown in fig. 21. It marks in "St. David's Pillar" at the point P. But it is clear that this is 39ft., not 29ft., from the corner of the chapel. (29ft. would be at the point X.) Other illustrations in the same publication appear to show a different shape and position for the chapel, resulting in "St. David's Pillar" coinciding with the point Y.

I am altogether confused but I am inclined to wonder whether Bond's disembodied spirits may have irresponsibly encouraged theories which cloud the issue! The more pillars, churches, etc. are multiplied in the theories, the less chance there is of proving anything at all until they can be distinguished from each other.

The work came to a sudden end. To quote Bond's own words: "Without warning and before any measurements could be taken, the excavation was filled up by order of an

executive official. Other points where the ground had been opened were closed down in like fashion".

And there, on a very indefinite and unsatisfactory note, we leave the whole matter of vesicas and things associated with them, and turn to another subject which is, to my mind, even stranger.

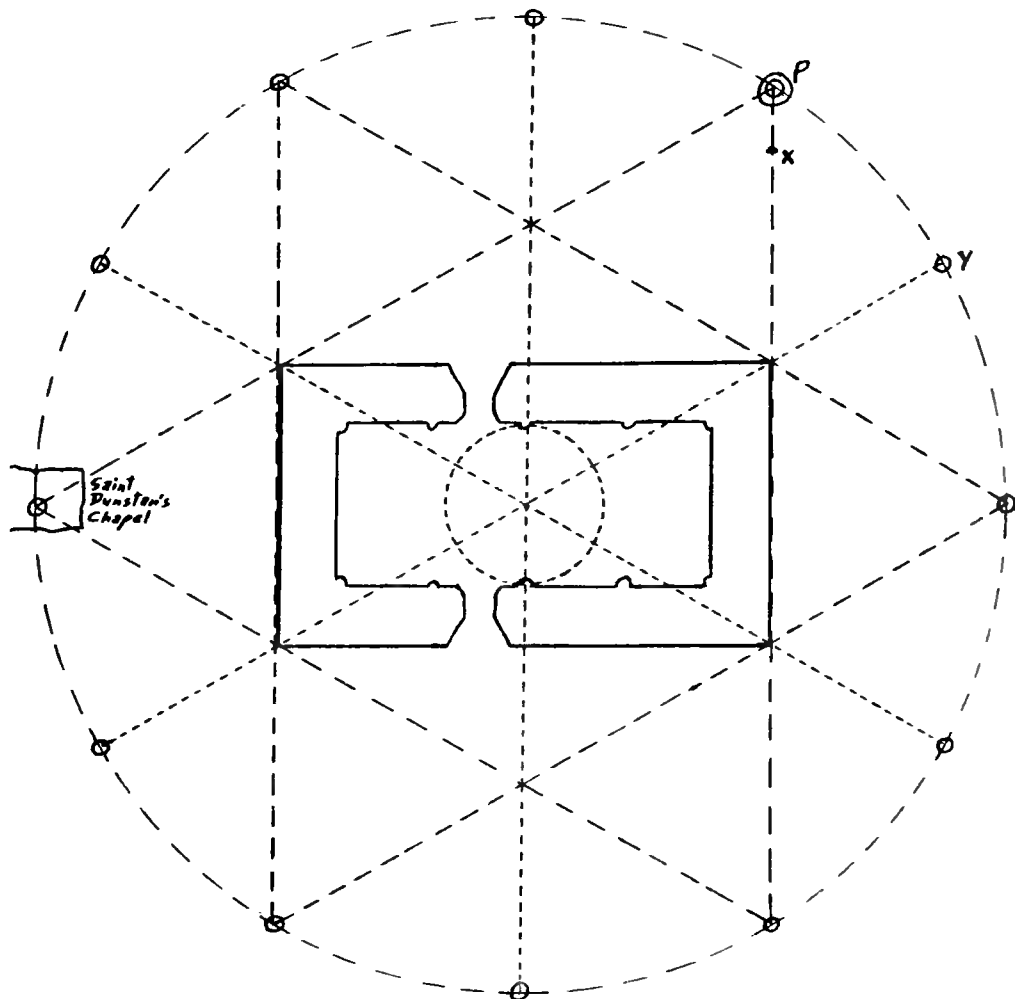


Fig. 21.

THE SOMERSET ZODIAC

In the 1920s a certain Mrs. Maltwood observed that on the Ordnance Survey map the curve of the River Cary six miles south of Glastonbury resembled the underside of an animal's body. Further investigation showed that by following the course of ancient roadways, ditches, earthworks and other similar features, she could trace the outline of a lion, over three miles in length. Being knowledgeable in zodiacal matters she looked for the figure of a giant in the same vicinity - and very soon found a giant child in a boat nearly three miles long.

The approximate outline of these two figures, together with a third figure, taurus the bull, is shown in fig. 22: if the diagram is traced onto thin paper and placed over the one inch to one mile Ordnance Survey map, it will be found to correspond well with the features on the map. (For the benefit of users of the new 1:50,000 - two centimetres to a kilometre; approximately one and a quarter inches to a mile - Ordnance sheets, this diagram is repeated at the larger scale in fig. 24.)

Also marked on figs. 22 and 24 are the stars of the constellation of Orion, the giant in the sky-zodiac. By use of a planisphere, placing the Pole Star over the centre of the Somerset zodiac at Butleigh (three miles south of Glastonbury) the positions of the stars of the sky-zodiac and the figures of the Somerset zodiac are found to correspond.

Further research showed a complete ten-mile-diameter circle of figures (some more identifiable than others) made up of signs of the zodiac. It stretches from Somerton to Pilton, and from Glastonbury to within four miles of Camelot. (See fig. 23, in which the smallest of the three circles represents the zodiac, and some of the larger figures are approximately indicated.) In Glastonbury, Wearyall Hill is one of the fishes of the pisces figure, and the Tor is on aquarius.

Libra and cancer do not appear; libra was not included in very ancient zodiacs, and those who search into these

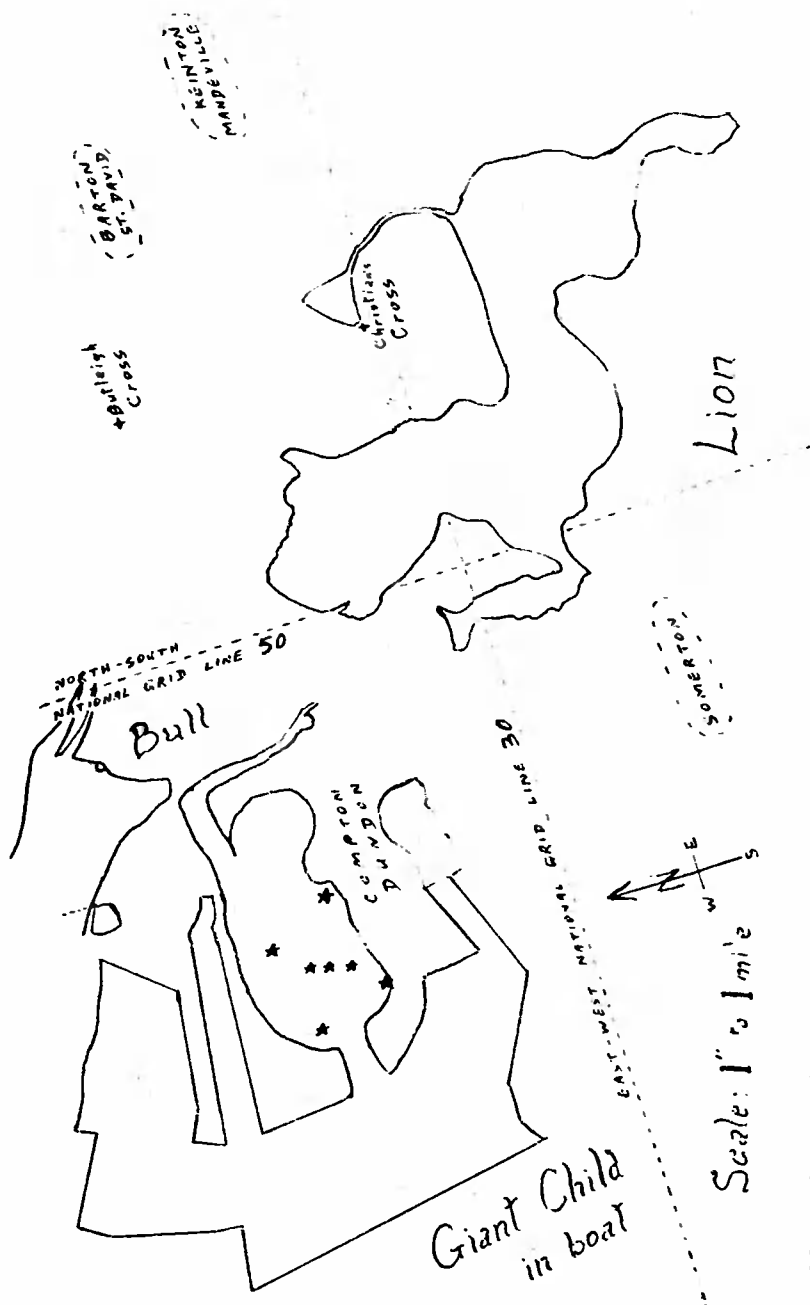


Fig. 22. Three Figures of the Somerset Zodiac.

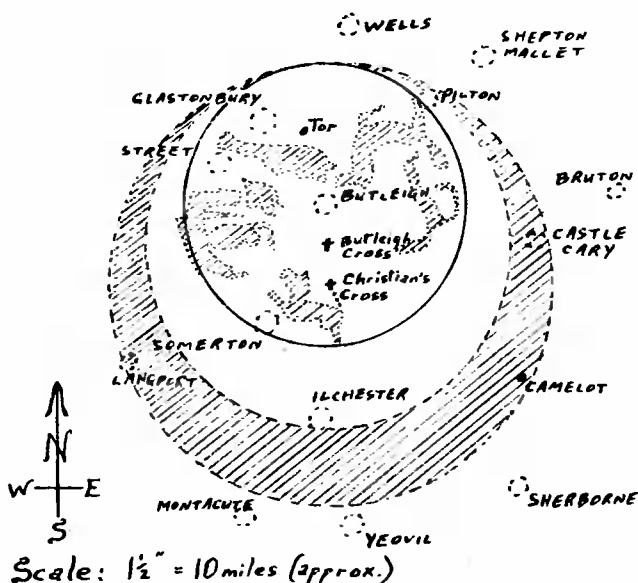


Fig. 23.

matters (an indefinable group generally referred to in this chapter as "they") tell me that cancer would fall immediately underneath leo, and thus be hidden, in the Somerset pattern; "they" say that in the relationship of the stars of the heavenly zodiac to the Somerset pattern the stars of the constellation cancer fall on the neck of the lion.

What is the origin of the Somerset zodiac? No-one knows. It is pre-Christian, and probably pre-Druid, its age having been estimated as three thousand years or more. How the peoples of 1000 B.C. or even earlier managed to design and construct this circle of figures (which is too large for anyone to appreciate fully from ground level) is another question we cannot answer.

Some people maintain that such a pattern could not have been laid out unless its designers were able to fly, and that this supports the theory on which we touched earlier in this chapter (yes, here come those "space-travellers" again!) that beings whose home is not

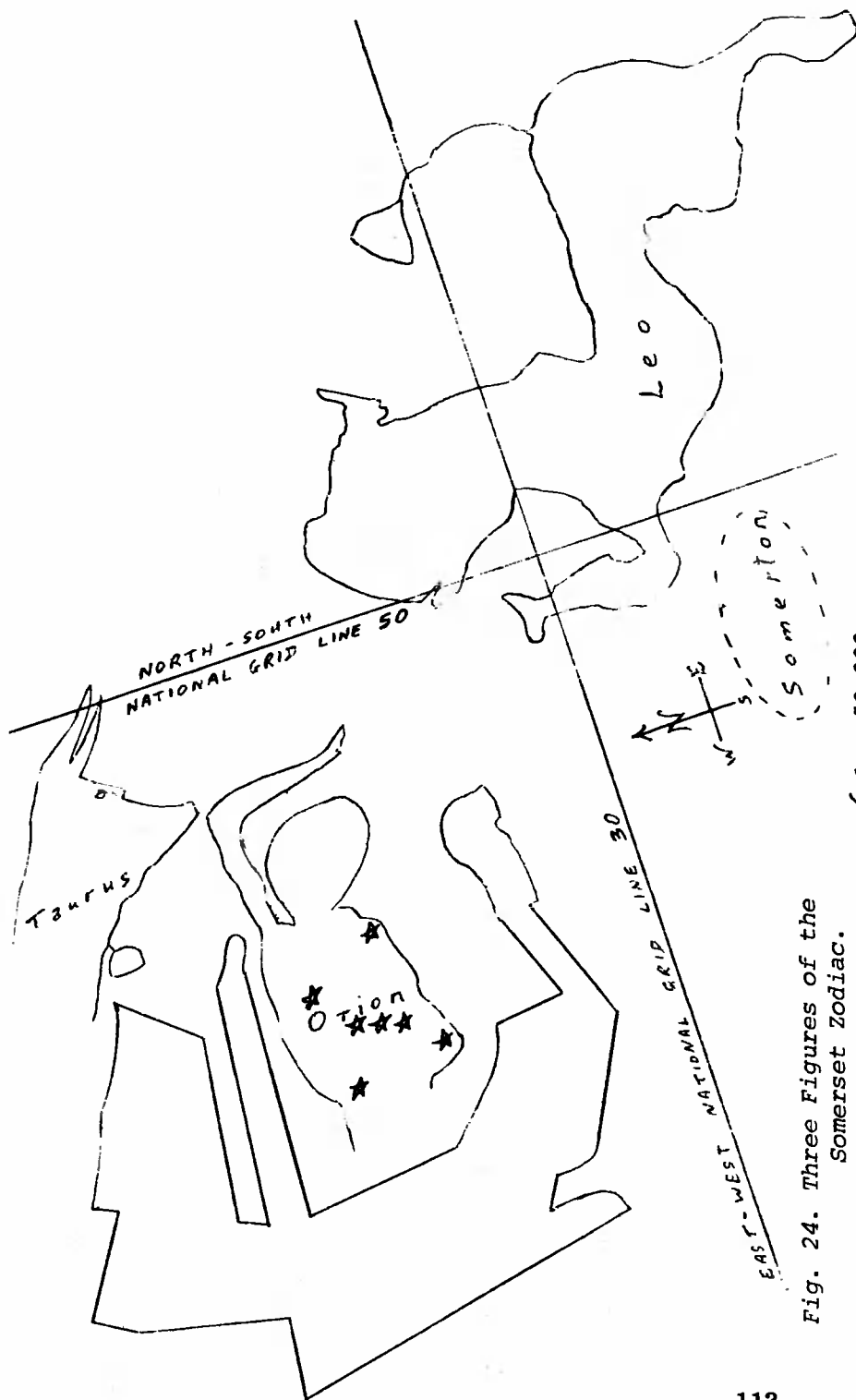



Fig. 24. Three Figures of the
Somerseset Zodiac.

Scale: $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1 : 50,000 \\ 2 \text{ cms. to } 1 \text{ km.} \\ \text{approx. } 1\frac{1}{4} \text{ ins. to } 1 \text{ mile.} \end{array} \right.$

in this world visited the human race in remote times. So, right here in Glastonbury, we encounter those extra-terrestrial Beings that we met previously on page 88.

The Somerset zodiac is probably not the only one. It is claimed there are traces of others in Carmarthenshire, Durham, Yorkshire, London (Kingston on Thames) and other places. There are other ancient giant figures in the desert areas of the United States and South America.

Having admitted that we cannot satisfactorily explain *how* the Somerset zodiac was made, can we explain *why* it was made? In answer to this question I have heard a variety of remarkable theories. I have heard the zodiac referred to as an "eye of Hermes" by which the world keeps its eye on the heavenly zodiac: if all the earth's eyes became completely blocked by pollution there would be a disaster - I am told - comparable to the disappearance of the lost land of Atlantis. (Of course, world pollution could indeed bring about a disaster: to that extent the theory is undoubtedly true.)

Then again I have known an occasion when on top of the Somerset zodiac map and the planisphere "they" have placed a six-pointed star made up of two equilateral triangles. (Thus: ) The corners of the one triangle pointed to Chalice Well (*symbolic of Christianity*) leo (*the Jews' lion of Judah*) and a symbol connected with the virgin moon crescent (*the crescent being a Moslem emblem*) - i.e. three monotheistic religions. The corners of the other triangle fell on taurus (*sacred bull of the Hindus*) a figure in the sagittarius area (*given a Buddhist interpretation*) and virgo (*signifying fertility cults: the old nature-worship*) - three polytheistic religions.

So far as I can ascertain, no-one knows the origin of the pictures in the sky which make up the heavenly zodiac. It is known that they are of great antiquity: in Egypt there are representations of the heavenly zodiac pictures (e.g. those at Denderah) which must be placed nearly four thousand years before Christ. The zodiac appears to be an attempt to hand down a remnant of knowledge dating from

before Noah's flood. Ancient traditions connect it with Adam, his son Seth (*Genesis* 4, 25) and his descendant Enoch (*Genesis* 5, 18). It also appears that the twelve signs of the zodiac are the same, as to their order and the meaning of their names, in all the ancient civilisations of the world. The zodiac was not limited to a few tribes.

So: where did they get it from?

On a clear night most of us can pick out Orion the Hunter - who in point of fact is not one of the twelve signs but is one of a further thirty-six groups of stars connected with the twelve signs. Some of us can pick out the Great Bear (another of the thirty-six) - looking more like a saucepan than an animal. But how many of us can pick out the shape of a crab, or a lion, or a scorpion? The pictures bear scarcely any relation to the groups of stars. So we may be certain of one thing: the ancients did not obtain their zodiac by looking at the sky and seeing the pictures outlined by the stars.

The likeliest explanation which I have come across - one which we will look at in some detail, to see how it applies to the heavenly zodiac and to the Somerset pattern - is that set forth by the nineteenth-century Bible scholar Dr. E.W.Bullinger in "The Witness of the Stars" - a book which is not now easy to obtain. The outline of the theory is that in the remote depths of human history many centuries B.C. when the human race was young - before Stonehenge was built, before *Genesis* was written - the zodiac pictures were divinely revealed to mankind. These pictures upon the night sky are found in similar form in all ancient civilisations because they were originally given to man by God - inspired something like the Bible and carrying the same basic message as the Bible.

Those students of these things who believe that this planet long ago received visitors from space should have expected this. *If* these people claim that certain acts attributed by the Old Testament to the

Christians' God were in fact carried out by space-visitors, and if they claim that the giant zodiacs in Somerset and elsewhere were laid out by these space-visitors, then they have to accept that the message laid out in the zodiac is likely to be similar to the messages that the same visitors gave to Ezekiel (and other prophets) in the Old Testament.

(Proof-reader's note: "I don't understand that: surely you don't believe Ezekiel got his messages from spacemen?")

(Author's reply to proof-reader's note: "I didn't say Ezekiel got his messages from spacemen. What I do say is that there are people today who would say it. And some of these are interested in the Somerset and other zodiacs and say these too were laid out by spacemen. The same spacemen, presumably. So I can say to these people: you admit that by your theories the zodiac and Ezekiel's messages have the same author. Therefore why should they not both have the same thing to say? Do not be surprised if the zodiac proclaims a forthcoming Messiah, the same as the Old Testament does".)

So what is the message of the zodiac? Let us take this in stages. Let us see what Dr. Bullinger claims to read in the heavenly zodiac, then let us see if this stands up to being applied to the Somerset pattern - but before we do this we must have a quick résumé of what the heavenly zodiac is, for the benefit of those readers who only know it as a series of headings in the "What the Stars foretell" column of their daily newspaper.

The Nature of the Zodiac

The stars in the sky are divided into groups known as constellations. There are forty-eight important ones dating from ancient times. Twelve of these which are on the sun's "ecliptic" (a path followed by the sun, explained below) are the twelve signs of the zodiac. The other thirty-six are either above or below the "ecliptic".

The earth spins on its axis once every twenty-four hours. One result of this is that the stars appear to go round the earth every twenty-four hours, and so does the sun, rising in the east and setting in the west. But the sun appears to go at a slightly different rate (because the earth travels round the sun once every year) so the sun goes round in a different "house" (i.e. a different sign of the zodiac) each month, returning to where it began at the end of a year. This path through the twelve signs is the sun's "ecliptic".

For example, the group of stars known as leo the lion is one of the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the sun goes round in the house of leo in August every year.

Each year the sun does not *quite* get back to where it started. It loses about 1° every 71 years: it would lose a complete circuit every 25,579 years. This is known as "the precession of the equinoxes".

A complete circuit of the heavens is 360° so each of the twelve houses occupies a segment of 30° . It is easy to calculate that it takes between twenty-one and twenty-two centuries (71×30 years) for the sun to lose a complete house. Thus we are told that at about the time of Christ the sun at spring equinox passed from aries (*the ram*) into pisces (*the fishes*) and it is now passing from pisces into aquarius (*the water-carrier*). Back in the days of Moses it was still in the sign of taurus the bull, which may be what Aaron was trying to worship when he made the golden calf.

If we picture the whole sky as an enormous cake cut into twelve slices, we find that each slice contains one sign of the zodiac, and each sign has three more constellations above or below it, associated with it. Twelve signs plus thirty-six other constellations: forty-eight constellations in all. And they tell a story in forty-eight chapters.

Where does the circle of signs begin? New year? No. - Spring? No. - Midsummer? No. Let us go back to Egypt where ancient zodiacs are still preserved, and let us

stand by the Great Pyramid and look over the desert. The Sphinx leers down at us with its enigmatic smile. Alright you grinning Sphinx: we know your secret. You have the face of a woman and the body of a lion. And the zodiac message starts with a woman (virgo) and ends with a lion (leo).

The Message of the Zodiac

The twelve signs divide into three books, each of four signs, telling the same story in three different ways - just as we have four Gospels giving us one story in four ways. The story in the zodiac is a story of a coming redeemer who is to suffer for the salvation of men.

When the message had been put into writing (by Moses, when under God's inspiration he wrote Genesis) there was no longer the same need for the message in the sky which had comforted mankind through the hundreds of years from when man left the Garden of Eden to the time of Moses. The nations began to forget the true meaning of the heavenly pictures. When the original significations were lost, they invented meanings by imagination. Greek mythology is an interpretation of some of the constellations. So we see that the Bible is not a development from ancient religions, but the ancient religions are a corruption and perversion of the original truth which the Bible now records.

We must remember that if the zodiac was brought to Glastonbury around 1000 B.C., this was long after the original message of the pictures had begun to be forgotten. We must expect to find changes and perversions, as well as some truth.

Now let us see how Dr. Bullinger finds the message in the stars.

The first book (signs virgo, libra, scorpio and sagittarius) tells of the redeemer's coming to suffer and to save, and we will look briefly at part of it in a moment. The second book (capricornus, aquarius, pisces and aries) deals with the redeemed people, and space

permits only the briefest glance, The third book (taurus, gemini, cancer and leo) which tells of His coming in glory - the awaited Second Coming - is the portion of the zodiac covered by figs. 22 and 24, and we will look at it in a little more detail.

The secret of the message is in the names of the constellations and the stars: the names which were given to them in ancient times before the errors and perversions crept in. We shall see a few of these names below. (To keep the matter brief, I have generally had to omit the names of the individual stars, except in the last of the three "books" of the zodiac.) Some of the names are Chaldaean, some Arabic, some Hebrew, some ancient Egyptian, and some are from the ancient Akkadian language. Latin and Greek names are generally too recent to be reliable.

1 1 *The First Book.* This begins with the sign virgo. Though the Greeks changed her into ceres the corn-goddess, her original symbolism is of the one about whom Isaiah spoke (*Isaiah 7, 14*): "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son..."

The three constellations associated with this first sign are Coma, centaurus and Boötes. Coma, though changed about the third century B.C. to show hair or a wig, is shown in the Denderah zodiac of nearly 4000 B.C. as a woman and young child. Here is virgo with her child. Shakespeare appears to have known something of this as he makes a veiled reference to "the good boy in virgo's lap" in *Titus Andronicus*, Act 4, Scene 3.

The second associated constellation, centaurus (a creature having a man's head and trunk and a horse's body) is a being with two natures. Here is a representation of "the good boy in virgo's lap" when fully grown - Jesus true God and yet true man. "He is despised", prophesied Isaiah (*Isaiah 53, 3*) - and the ancient name of this constellation was *Bezeh* (Hebrew) and *Al Beze* (Arabic) meaning "the despised".

Boötes represents this same Christ returning in glory

at the Second Coming.

1 2 The second zodiacal sign libra shows mankind: he needs a sacrifice to be made for him: he is in the claw of the enemy (the scorpion in this part of the zodiac): he is weighed in the balances and found wanting.

The three constellations associated with libra are crux (the southern cross) victima the victim slain - its alternative name lupus the wolf being a comparatively modern addition - and corona the crown. These three signify the Christ slain but then receiving the royal crown.

1 3 The zodiac's third sign is scorpio, endeavouring to sting in the heel a mighty man struggling with a serpent, but the scorpion is crushed by the man. (Ophiuchus is stamping on his head in the heavenly zodiac.) This is in line with the earliest Biblical prophecy of a Saviour: *Genesis 3, 15* - a promise made to the serpent in the Garden of Eden - the seed of the woman "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". This promise was fulfilled when Jesus, the seed of the virgin Mary, bruised the head of Satan by defeating him for ever - but Satan bruised His heel by making Him die on the cross.

The constellations associated with scorpio are serpens the serpent (which like scorpio represents Satan), Ophiuchus struggling with the serpent and stamping on the head of the scorpion (thus in two ways portraying Christ fighting Satan) and Hercules who again represents Christ bruising Satan's head - Hercules is pictured as stamping on the head of draco the dragon.

1 4 Sagittarius the archer is our fourth sign. He is a centaur in the heavenly zodiac, and thus a being with two natures, a picture of Christ, true God and yet true man. This sign and the three constellations associated with it (lyra the harp, ara the altar - consuming fire for the Lord's enemies - and draco the dragon representing again Satan) are occupied with the redeemer's triumph.

The Second Book. This shows us God's redeemed people. The four signs revealing the message of this book are:-

2 1 capricornus the goat (with sagitta the arrow, aquila the eagle and delphinus the dolphin associated)

2 2 aquarius the water-carrier (piscis australis the southern fish, pegasus the flying horse and cygnus the swan associated)

2 3 pisces the fishes (the band between the fishes, andromeda the chained woman and cepheus the king associated) and

2 4 aries the ram (cassiopeia the enthroned woman, cetus the sea-monster and perseus the breaker associated).

The goat and the ram or lamb are both animals of sacrifice in the Old Testament, and capricornus and aries with their associated constellations are pictures of Christ the Lamb of God, the scapegoat, the complete sacrifice. At the moment of His crucifixion the sun was in the house of aries, so when the sun was darkened as Jesus hung on the cross (*Luke 23, 45*) the stars *El Nath* ("slain") and *El Sharatan* ("bruised") in aries would have shone down upon Jerusalem...

Aquarius pouring forth his apparently-inexhaustible supply of water symbolises the redeemed people with their blessings poured forth upon them, while pisces represents the blessings of the redeemed in abeyance, God's people having not yet entered into their eternal joy. This latter seems to have been the lot of so many Christians over the centuries.

Astrologers tell us we are now passing out of the age of pisces into that of aquarius.

3 1 *The Third Book.* This has for its first house taurus the bull. This is a picture of the Saviour Christ: let us look at the stars individually. The brightest star in this sign is *Al Debaran* (situated in the bull's eye) meaning "leader" or "governor". At

the top of the left horn is the star *El Nath* (not the same *El Nath* we saw in aries) meaning "wounded" or "slain". In this picture His people are safe with Him, for the constellation includes the stars of the pleiades, meaning "congregation of the judge or ruler", and the hyades, "the congregated". Other stars in taurus include *Palilicium* "belonging to the judge", and *Al Thuraiya* "the abundance".

So when He comes in Glory to judge, His redeemed people are already safe.

The three constellations associated with taurus are Orion, eridanus and auriga.

Orion, though not one of the twelve signs, is one of the best-known constellations, and most people can pick him out - the sky-giant with the three brilliant stars across his belt. He represents the coming King of Glory. (Not a hunter: that is a fable from later times.)

What are his chief stars (the stars shown in figs. 22 and 24) and what do their names mean?

His two shoulders are *Betelgeuse* "the coming of the branch" ("branch" being a word used to portray the Messiah in the prophecy of Isaiah 11, 1) and *Bellatrix* "quickly coming" or "swiftly destroying". In his legs are *Rigol* "the foot that crusheth" and *Saiph* "bruised". Note again the parallel with Genesis 3, 15: God's words to the serpent Satan: the Messiah "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". The crushing foot *Rigol* is coming down onto the head of lepus the hare, the enemy.

The highest star in Orion's belt is *Al Nitak* "the wounded one"; other stars in the constellation include *Al Rai* "he who bruises or breaks" and *Thabit* "treading on".

A group of Arabic names relate to his person: *Al Gebor* "the mighty", *Al Mirzam* "the ruler", *Al Nagjed* "the prince", etc. In ancient Akkadian the name of the constellation is *Ur-ana* "the light of heaven", and in the Egyptian Denderah zodiac he is *Ha-ga-t* "this is he who triumphs". He is a great picture of the victorious Christ.

The second constellation associated with the sign of taurus is eridanus, the river. It issues from under the crushing foot of Orion, and goes down out of sight below the horizon: to the final judgment, the lake of fire - and the Greek myths, though perversions of the original message, still connect it with fire. Its eighty-four stars include *Zourac* "flowing" and *Ozha* "the going forth".

In the Somerset zodiac before the draining of the moors the flood went out from Orion down the Bristol Channel and was lost into the Atlantic Ocean beyond Lundy Island. We will look at the Somerset zodiac in a minute.

The third constellation associated with taurus is auriga. This picture, handed down from antiquity, shows a man with a she-goat on his shoulder and two new-born kids in his hands; representing the redeemed gathered in by their Saviour the Good Shepherd. His name auriga is from a Hebrew root meaning "a shepherd". But auriga in Latin means "a charioteer" and he has therefore become known as the charioteer - yet he has no chariot, and to hold three goats while driving a chariot would scarcely win him a safe-driving award in any case!

The constellation's brightest star (in the she-goat's body) is *Alioth* "a she-goat"; others are *Maaz* "a flock of goats" and *Gedi* "kids". Who the figure represents is made clear by the bright star *El Nath* - the third *El Nath* we have seen - meaning "wounded" or "slain".

3 2 Leaving the house of taurus, our next sign is gemini, the twins. These twin brothers (one human, one divine, legend tells us) are again symbolic of Christ with His dual nature human and divine.

Gemini's three associated constellations are lepus, canis major and canis minor. Lepus the hare is the enemy trodden under foot. In the heavenly zodiac he is under Orion's foot and his stars include *Arnebo* "the enemy of him that comes", *Nibal* "the mad" and *Sugia* "the deceiver".

Canis major the big dog, also known as sirius the

prince (his chief star *Sirius* being the brightest in the whole heavens) represents the coming glorious Prince of princes. His stars include (in the left forefoot) *Mirzam* "the prince or ruler", (in the body) *Wesen* "the bright or shining", and (in the right hind leg) *Adhara* "the glorious". Others are *Aschere* "who shall come", *Seir* "the prince", and *Abur* "the mighty". These names have no message if applied to a dog, but they all apply to a prince.

The little dog *canis minor* is the third constellation connected with the house of *gemini*. In the ancient *Denderah* zodiac, his name and outline are quite different. The name is *sebak* ("conquering"; "victorious") and the picture is that of a human figure with a hawk's head and tail. The ancient star names show us that here we have another picture of the redeemer returning in glory:- *Procyon* "redeemer", *Al Gomeisa* "burdened" or "bearing for others", *Al Mirzam* "the prince or ruler", *Al Gomeyra* "he who completes or perfects".

3 3 Our third sign (leaving *gemini* now) is *cancer* the crab. It is accepted that this sign does not appear on the *Somerset* zodiac because the stars of *cancer* fall on the shoulder of the very large representation of the lion *leo*. *Cancer* appears in the heavenly zodiac, and its meaning is, "the Messiah's redeemed held fast". Its stars include *Acubene* "the sheltering or hiding-place" and *Ma'alaph* "assembled thousands".

Cancer's associated constellations are the little bear, the great bear and *argo* the ship.

Neither the little bear nor the great bear are bears. They are the lesser and greater *folds*. The brightest star in the great bear is *Dubheh* (see fig. 25) meaning "a herd of animals". The Arabic word "dubah" means "cattle". But Arabic "dub" is "a bear". Similarly Hebrew "dohver" means "cattle-fold", but Hebrew "dohv" is "a bear". Thus it seems the greater and lesser cattle-folds were accidentally turned into bears as their true meaning was forgotten. Let us look at the names of the stars in the great fold. The constellation is well-known under the names

of the great bear, the plough, and Charles' wain, and most people can pick it out in the night sky. It is shown in fig. 25.

The meanings of the names of its stars are:-

Dubheh "a herd of animals",
Merach "the flock", "purchased",
Phaeda "visited", "guarded", "numbered",
Alioth "a she-goat",
Mizar "separate",
Al Cor (the very small star close to *Mizar*) "the lamb",
Benet Naish "the daughters of the assembly",
El Alcola "the sheepfold",
Cab'd al Asad "multitude",
Annaish "the assembled",
Megrez "separated" (as the flock in the fold is
separated from the world),
El Kaphrah "protected", "covered", "redeemed", "ransomed"
Calisto "the sheepfold set or appointed",
etc.

There appears to be no discordant voice - and no bears!

The constellation *argo navis*, the ship, the third constellation associated with cancer, appears in the Somerset zodiac with Orion sitting in it. Nearly ten centuries B.C., Homer sang of the ship of the argonauts, whose voyage may have been made shortly after the death of King Solomon (about 975 B.C.) - or even earlier. There is an almost-forgotten legend - just an indefinite faint memory from long ago - of a ship of Solomon's which seems to have visited Glastonbury. But these are comparatively recent changes: the original zodiac message is much older than that.

The constellation signifies "the pilgrims safe at home", and includes the stars *Canopus* "the possession of him who comes", *Sephina* "the multitude" and *Tureis* "the possession".

3 4 So we come to our last sign, which is leo. This

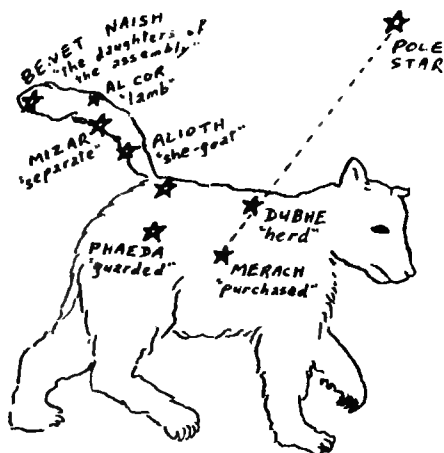


Fig. 25. The Great Sheepfold.

is the Lion of Judah aroused for the rending of the prey. In the Denderah zodiac the lion is treading a serpent underfoot. In the heavenly zodiac the lion's feet are over the head of hydra the water-snake and are about to descend and crush it. In the Somerset zodiac the lion's feet are upraised above the snaking River Cary as if about to descend upon it.

The brightest star of the sign is *Regulus* "treading underfoot". Others are *Denebola* "the Judge or Lord who comes", *Al Giebha* "the exaltation", and *Deneb Aleced* "the judge comes who seizes".

The three constellations associated with this sign are all "nasty" ones: they are hydra the water-snake (the old serpent, Satan, destroyed), crater the cup (the cup of divine wrath poured out) and corvus the raven (a bird of prey devouring the serpent).

Hydra, meaning "he is abhorred", and represented apparently in the Somerset zodiac by the River Cary, includes the stars *Al Drian* "the abhorred" and *Minchar al Sugia* "the piercing of the deceiver".

Crater, the cup of divine wrath, is attached by stars

to the serpent hydra's body. This is no fabulous wine-cup of Bacchus! The pouring out of the divine wrath is also referred to in chapters 14 and 16 of the book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible.

Corvus the serpent-devouring raven includes the stars *Al Chibar* (Arabic, but from the Hebrew "chiba" meaning "accursed") and *Minchar al Gorab* "the raven tearing to pieces".

This, then, seems to be the true message of the zodiac it is a message of a God-man, born of a woman, and He suffers and He saves. It is a message which shows mankind in two groups: there are the saved, who do nothing to save themselves except to rely on their Saviour, letting Him carry them like auriga's goats and put them into His sheepfold; and there are the others, on their way down to the abyss. There seems to be no suggestion that everyone is saved, nor that religious observances or a high moral standard will lead to salvation...

Application of the Message to the Somerset Zodiac

All this which we have seen ties in pretty well with the Somerset pattern, despite the differences between the heavenly and the Somerset zodiacs.

In the Somerset zodiac, the message is the same, and starts as before with virgo.

Libra is not shown, but if a planisphere is applied to the layout the stars of libra fall in the right claw of the scorpion. The indication is the same: man is in the claw of the evil one.

Not all forty-eight constellations appear: some are absent, and a few are combined. The figures of sagittarius and Hercules seem to be combined as a man mounted on a horse - or, to be exact, in the act of falling off the horse! In the Glastonbury legends, King Arthur has become Glastonbury's Hercules, and the zodiac figure is taken as King Arthur falling off his horse.

So the figure of the man, Arthur, represents the constellation Hercules, while the man and the horse together portray the sign sagittarius. The scorpion in the Somerset zodiac is stinging at Arthur's heel; but Arthur has fulfilled the Genesis 3, 15 promise with a vengeance by cutting off the scorpion's head! Thus the original symbolism, in which both sagittarius and Hercules are pictures of Christ and scorpio is Satan, holds good.

In the Denderah zodiac, draco the dragon is a serpent being trodden under the forefeet of sagittarius, and in the Somerset zodiac the dragon path mentioned on page 79 passes not far below the feet of Arthur's horse.

The goat capricornus is east of Glastonbury Tor, and there is a legend of the Tor being attacked by a big goat, for which this must surely be the source. The Tor forms part of aquarius, and Wearyall Hill part of pisces, the effigy of the fishes. (Wearyall Hill from Fishers Hill to Pomparles forms one of the fishes of the pisces effigy.) It is rather strange that - if legend is true - Christ may have landed at Wearyall Hill (the fish: symbol of pisces and of Christ) at the beginning of the piscean age, and some people expect Him to return on the Tor (aquarius) at the beginning of the aquarian age. This idea (a very recently-developed one, I think) that Christ may return on the Tor is looked at in chapter 7. Strange, too, when Christ may have come to Glastonbury in a boat, that Orion, the brightest representation of Christ in the zodiac, is shown in the Somerset zodiac as being in a boat. Yet the Somerset zodiac is pre-Christian. Perhaps the picture was prophetic.

Aries is in the Street area. Taurus is south of Street and is shown in figs. 22 and 24. His horns are marked by prehistoric earthworks along Hatch Hill.

How the next sign, gemini the twins, is shown in the Glastonbury pattern is not altogether clear. Its stars fall on leo's muzzle, and it has been suggested that the giant child Orion in his boat and the griffon bird on the poop of the boat symbolise the twins. So if this theory is correct the giant does two jobs in the Somerset zodiac: he is the

constellation Orion, and he is one of the twins of the sign gemini.

We have already seen how in the heavenly zodiac eridanus (the river) runs down to black depths below the horizon, and in the Somerset zodiac before the draining of the moors it ran to equally mysterious depths beyond Lundy.

The stars of cancer fall under the figure of leo. Leo we saw in the heavens about to descend on his prey, hydra the water-snake. This has an exact parallel in the Somerset layout: the lion's forefeet appear about to pounce down onto the snaking River Cary. The symbolism is accurate, for the waters of this river join with the Somerset eridanus to disappear into the ocean beyond Lundy.

The "High History"

We must not leave the zodiac without first considering the mediaeval romance "The High History of the Holy Graal", which has connections with the Somerset zodiac. Originally written (anonymously) as "Perlesvaus", probably not later than 1225, it was translated into English from its original Norman French by Rev. Sebastian Evans. We mentioned it in passing in chapters 3 and 4; this time let us not pass it without seeing what it is.

"High History" is basically the stories of Gawain, who sees the Grail but fails to ask the essential question, Lancelot who in this version does not see the Grail, Perceval who becomes king of the castle where the Grail is to be found, and Arthur who eventually sees the Grail in five forms. If we assume the "High History" stories of Gawain, Lancelot, Perceval and Arthur are four versions of one original legend, we have a story of an initiation achieving the Grail, and an account of the end of the sun-cult, more or less the same as the Percival Story we saw in chapter 4.

That makes everything sound straightforward, but "High History" is far from that. The tale has a generally pro-Christian flavour, of a mediaeval variety paying much honour to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We have seen that some say it was produced for publicity when the mediaeval abbey urgently had need of funds after the 1184 fire. As the knights in the story ride upon their adventures, coming up against magic castles and enchantments wierd and wonderful, they and their chivalry and heraldry are also distinctly mediaeval. But what makes the story really complicated is its mysterious connection with the Glastonbury area, and particularly with the zodiac region. Whoever wrote "High History" knew of the local zodiac figures: the places the heroes visit in "High History" correspond to spots on the map in or near the zodiac.

For example. Arthur kills the Black Knight and cuts off his head. That seems an ordinary enough adventure. But those with a seeing eye will perceive that it corresponds with the Somerset zodiac, where we saw that the figure of Arthur (Hercules) had cut off the head of the giant scorpion who symbolises Satan. During their battle the Black Knight pierces Arthur's left arm with a magical fiery spear, but as the thrust enters the arm the flame is marvellously extinguished. If we mark on the Ordnance Survey map the position of the Arthur effigy, we find that Arthur's left arm extends along the River Brue.

That is the secret of why the fiery spear was quenched: it went into the river!

There are many other similar hidden meanings in numerous other episodes in the book.

The achievement of the Grail, in the "High History", takes place at King Fisherman's Castle. On page 65 we saw a theory that the whole Percival story (of which "High History" is a development) originated from an initiation ceremony in which a youth was beheaded in Wookey Hole cave and the Grail (cauldron) was brought forth from the recesses of the fourth chamber of the cavern. In the "High History" the symbolism is different: though there is a

Castle of the Black Hermit which seems to answer the description of Wookey Hole cave, and beheadings take place there, the appearances of the Grail and lance and the visits to the maimed king take place at a different location - King Fisherman's Castle which fairly clearly in "High History" is situate on Wearyall Hill between Glastonbury and Street, this hill being as we saw one of the fishes of the pisces figure in the Somerset zodiac.

I am inclined to wonder whether the writer of the "High History" claimed a sort of "poetic licence" and moved King Fisherman's Castle from Wookey to Wearyall for the purposes of his story. As a result of the change - if it is a change - the Fisherman's castle is on the fish figure of the zodiac, and the achievement of the Grail (which in the "High History" is a Christian symbol) takes place in pisces - the piscean age being the Christian era and the fish a Christian symbol. The "High History" is a book in which that sort of correspondence frequently - and presumably deliberately - occurs.

To this day the hill leading from central Glastonbury towards Wearyall Hill is called Fishers Hill

To see *how* the "High History" might have come into being is not too difficult. To see *why* it should have done so is more of a problem. So let us fit together things we have seen, and try to follow *how* the "High History" may have come about. It seems to have happened in about seven stages. The story originated with (1) the zodiac, followed by (2) the Grail. Then (3) the legend was Christianised, and later (4) Arthur was added. In the Middle Ages (5) the ending of the sun-worship was included, and then (6) the tale was made into a mediaeval romance. Finally (7) the "High History" came out of this mixture. These seven stages are worth a slightly closer look.

First there was the Somerset zodiac. It is believed that by the time of King Solomon's death (say about 975 B.C.) Phoenician traders or one of Solomon's own

ships had already found the way to the Somerset coast, so could have brought the knowledge of the zodiac - but by this time its real meaning was already being forgotten and the labours of Hercules and other mythological tales were beginning to replace its true message. Alternatively there is the theory that it was brought even earlier by mighty beings in spacecraft.

Secondly, also in the Glastonbury area, we have seen the sun-worshippers with their grail-cauldron. The zodiac too is dependent on the sun, and as there appear to be no legends of any friction between the zodiac men and the grail men, my guess is that they became combined: the Druids inherited the zodiac in connection with their sun-worship.

So at this point we have the comparatively-straightforward story of the sun-cult initiation with its grail talisman, and with the Somerset zodiac possibly having some place in the cult's ritual.

If Jesus came to Glastonbury He could thus have found in these giant pictures the same message as He saw in the Old Testament scriptures with which He was familiar - though what the local Druids' beliefs on the zodiac might by then have degenerated into we can scarcely begin to imagine.

The third step is the "Christianisation" of the grail story. Joseph of Arimathaea preached the Christian Gospel and possibly had some sort of a cup. Legend has taken this and made Joseph's "glorious golden chalice" the Holy Grail. Legend has also taken stories of the rivalries between the Christians and the sun-worshippers, and, as they are handed down by word of mouth, has incorporated them into the sun-cult legend. By the twelfth century (which is when we shall see the story suddenly appear in writing from several authors) these later additions will be inextricable from the original legend.

Fourthly: about the fifth century A.D. a noble warrior had his headquarters nearby. He not only puts marauding invaders to flight but also takes the Christian stand

against the sun-worshippers. The great Christian warrior becomes a legend. So the Grail legend's "Christianisation" is followed by its "Arthurianisation": the deeds of Arthur and his men are added into what is now becoming a complicated story.

Stories passed down by word of mouth grow. As Arthur progressed from history into legend, and later from legend into romantic myth, he grew from a chieftain to a king, from a king to an emperor who visited Rome, slew giants in Spain and conquered Denmark Norway and France - and from an emperor he grew into a sun-god who will return from Camelot or from the Tor when needed.

The fifth stage of development adds to the story the tradition of the ending of the sun-cult. Whether this refers to something which happened in the time of Joseph of Arimathaea, or the time of Arthur, or as late as Dunstan, we do not know - it may be a bit of each - but whatever the facts, a story of the abolition of the pagan cult by a Christian was incorporated into the "Matter of Britain" as the legend had become named by mediaeval times.

Sixthly there occurred a mediaeval romanticising of the story. Dunstan at the time of his exile in Flanders seems to have brought about this stage of development, for it appears likely that he took the story to Flanders and that as a result several continental writers used the story. The author Chrestien de Troyes, writer of the French poetical version which is probably older than the "High History", confirms that he obtained the story from the Count of Flanders.

Seventhly, someone who was familiar with the Glastonbury district and with the Somerset zodiac produced a version of the same story with a strong local flavour, making some of his heroes zodiacal figures, and cleverly weaving hidden meanings connected with the locality and with the zodiac into the already-complicated legend. This is the "High History".

Later users of the story - Malory with his "Morte

d'Arthur", Wagner with "Parsifal" and "Lohengrin", Tennyson with "Idylls of the King", and various other writers - did not have the same background knowledge and their works were further removed from the original legends.

If that is *how* the "High History" came about, there still remains the question of *why* such a tale was written. Has the whole thing some deeper meaning? Could it even be a sort of code-message containing the secret of what the ancient Glastonbury practices were all about?

Somehow the *scale* of the whole thing is peculiar. The historical Arthur galloped around from Cornwall to Scotland and maybe overseas; but although the "High History" makes reference to this, the exploits of Arthur and his knights in the "High History" are largely confined to within the limits of central Somerset - like a business transaction reduced to the scale of a game of Monopoly. Although in the "High History" Arthur and his knights seem to ride uncounted leagues of unknown forest, these rides apparently symbolise journeys of (often) about five miles from one point on or near the Somerset zodiac to another (mostly within the zodiac or within the shaded crescent-area in fig. 23) collecting magic swords and other talismans - rather like a Mid-Somerset Equestrian Treasure Hunt.

Why? Is there a hidden meaning? Why did whoever wrote the story send Gawain up to pisces, near Glastonbury, and then by way of aries (Street) to taurus, and thence right back to Orion (near Somerton) to fetch "the sword which beheaded John Baptist", and then bring him up to Glastonbury again? Is this the actual route used for some sun-worship ritual? Does the route itself provide scraps of information - like a treasure-hunt - leading to a goal where a prize is to be obtained? Does it mean anything at all - but if not, why did its writer go to such lengths to incorporate these veiled references to local spots throughout his book?

One researcher joined up twenty-two spots referred to in the "High History" in a manner dictated by the twenty-two trumps of the tarot cards. (Tarot cards are mediaeval playing-cards used by gypsies and others for

fortune-telling. I regard them as nasty dangerous things. I steer clear of occult practices such as this - and the modern astrological use of the heavenly zodiac - because, looking in from the outside, I am convinced that there are real spirit-world powers involved in such practices. I won't even read my horoscope. I believe it is for our own good that the Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 18, 10-12 to avoid all such practices.) Be that as it may, the joining up of the twenty-two spots in this way produced the outline of a giant swan superimposed upon the Somerset zodiac. If this has any significance, I have no idea what it is.

Perhaps the author of the "High History" liked showing off his local knowledge and enjoyed relating events to places, either because he knew of a connection or by imagination for the sheer fun of producing something which would make his readers scratch their heads and pit their wits and their knowledge of the locality against his.

I have looked in vain for a deeper meaning. The conclusion I eventually reached - and here comes an anti-climax - is that people are possibly trying to get far more out of the "High History" than its author ever put into it.

Geoffrey Ashe has unwittingly provided me with an example of what I am trying to say. Mr. Ashe has written a book called "The Finger and the Moon". It is a novel, but its setting is the Glastonbury area, and the reader who knows what to look for can find all sorts of hidden meanings referring to the tarot cards and other matters. Like the "High History", it has references to the zodiac, and Christianity, and the Grail, and Arthur. Nevertheless it is fiction.

Is the "High History" like this? - a novel? Or to put it another way, a thousand years from now will scholars puzzle over "The Finger and the Moon" just as we today puzzle over the "High History" thinking it is all sorts of things its author never imagined?

Let us come back to earth. To be specific, let us come back to Glastonbury Tor.

THE TOR LABYRINTH

Like previous subjects in this chapter, the labyrinth is a feature of the landscape which is there to be seen by anyone who cares to go and look at it.

As we approach the Tor through the gate near the main road, we see before us the long mound leading up to St. Michael's tower on the summit. The footpath goes straight up the mound - a long steep climb. As we pause for breath (as we surely shall unless we are really exceptionally fit) we can see the rather noticeable ridges and hollows, seemingly ancient trackways, running to our right and left around the hill.

The Druids in their ritual processions did not take the direct route to the top. They followed it part-way, and then turned off to the level marked "B" in fig. 26.

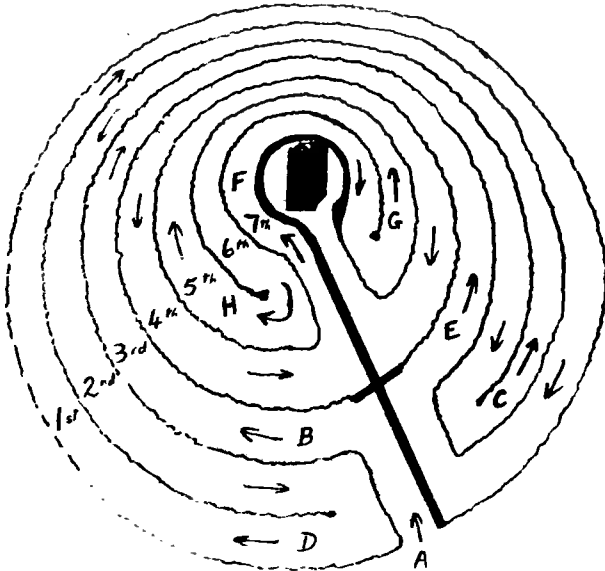


Fig. 26. An Impression of the Tor Labyrinth.

If the theory is correct, the labyrinth consisted of a long processional route running round the Tor in seven circles - the procession went round four times clockwise and three anti-clockwise to reach the summit.

This was not a maze, with false trails and blind ends designed to confuse. The route was clear, but the whole of all seven circles had to be traversed before the summit was reached.

The labyrinth today is in poor condition but enough of it remains for its general pattern to be appreciated. Somewhat similar "ring-roads" are to be seen at Burrow Mump ten miles south-west of Glastonbury, and on Cley Hill near Warminster (the town famous for its UFOs) about twenty-five miles east. The same pattern appears at Tintagel in Cornwall (*Tintagel has lots of Arthurian connections*) as rock carvings dated to 1500 B.C. or earlier; it is also found on ancient Cretan coins and is said to occur again in the legendary Minotaur's labyrinth at Crete. The identical design has been discovered in ancient rock carvings in Arizona; it can be traced also in Pompeii and in other places.

Somebody has put forward a theory that the alternating turns and circles represent the stages of man's evolution and contain a guiding plan which Arthur's knights had to attain in their quest of the Holy Grail. How these legends do get tangled together!

Though it looks complicated, the labyrinth is not difficult to draw. We start with a cross, four curves and four dots, thus:-



Fig. 27.

Let us call the four points of the cross north, south, east and west to distinguish them.

Now we will draw four lines: each will start from a point of the cross, take in one of the curves, and end at a dot.

Our first line is from the north point, through the north-east curve to the north-west dot, thus:-

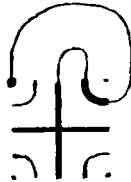


Fig. 28.

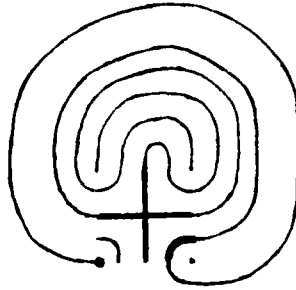
The second is from the east point, through the north-west curve to the north-east dot, thus:-



Fig. 29.

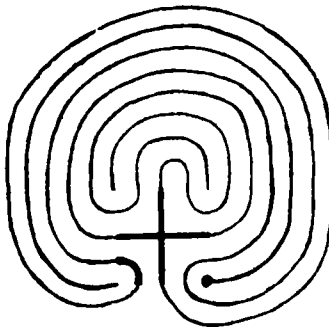
The third is from the west point, through the south-east curve to the south-west dot, thus:-

Fig. 30.



The fourth is from the south point, right round the outside and through the south-west curve to the south-east dot, thus:-

Fig. 31.



Developments of the pattern containing as many as eleven circles are known: there is one in France at Chartres Cathedral, which is shown in fig. 32.

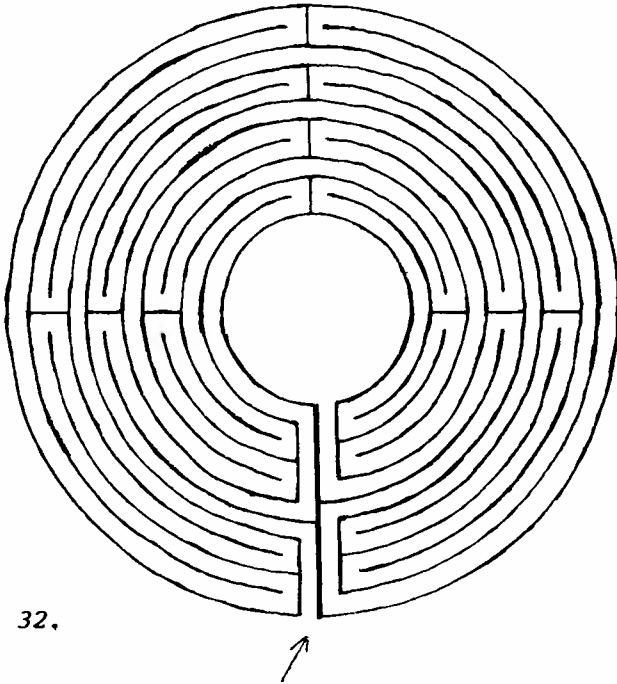


Fig. 32.

A RECENT DISCOVERY

Since the greater part of this chapter was written a new discovery has come to my notice. It concerns ley lines and the twelve "hides", and the reader can test it for himself on the Ordnance Survey map.

Draw a straight line through the Tor from the parish

church at Butleigh in the middle of the zodiac. This ley line if continued northwards on the map will be found to touch parish churches at Burrington and Brockley, a prehistoric structure known as Gorsey Bigbury (two miles south of Burrington) a prehistoric camp above Draycott, and some other ancient monuments. I am told this line can be traced right up to Scotland, but we are concerned with the portion of it close to Glastonbury. (For ease of reference I shall call this the Butleigh line.)

One of the most serious errors on ley-line research which has appeared in print is the statement that this line runs from Glastonbury down through Spain and continues straight on until it reaches the Great Pyramid in Egypt. The mind boggles - if yours doesn't, try to draw that line on an atlas and you'll find it misses Egypt by roughly two thousand miles. Some error!

We have seen (pages 44 and 101) that a "hide" can be taken as 120 acres, and we noted in chapter 2 (page 16) that King Arviragus and his son and grandson gave twelve hides to Joseph of Arimathaea and his followers. By the nineteenth century "The Twelve Hides" included the extensive piece of land from near Meare to near Pilton shown in fig. 5 on page 29. But the original twelve hides would have been 12 x 120 acres, i.e. 1,440 acres.

For a square to have an area of 1,440 acres, each of its sides must be exactly one and a half miles long.

Let us draw this square - the square of the Glaston Twelve Hides - with our Butleigh line forming its eastern side. This is the square P-Q-R-S in fig. 5.

(To construct this square on the Ordnance Survey map, draw a line passing through Cow Bridge, south of Glastonbury, and meet the Butleigh line at right angles: where the two lines meet is point P in fig. 5.)

Having drawn the square P-Q-R-S, we put in the

diagonals P-R and Q-S. We find, if we have done our drawing well, that just where they cross, at the exact centre of the square, there stands St. Mary's chapel, the most holy spot in the abbey ruins. Furthermore - maybe you've already spotted it on the map - the diagonal Q-S, extended north-east, goes straight through Wells Cathedral.

Now this discovery that St. Mary's chapel is the centre-spot of this ley-based square raises a major difficulty. We saw in chapter 2 (page 21) how the wattle church which formerly stood on this spot was the oldest in Glastonbury - the oldest in Britain - possibly the oldest in the world: it was said to have been built by Joseph of Arimathaea or even by Christ Himself. In the far-off times before the original purity of the Gospel message had become clouded with superstition, why did the builder of the wattle church choose *this* spot?

We saw earlier in this chapter that the wattle church was erected on the Glastonbury-Stonehenge-Canterbury ley line, but it was fairly easy perhaps to say, "Coincidence", and to continue to believe that ley lines and such like were part of the old pagan religion and had no bearing on Christianity. But add to this the facts that (i) the site of the wattle church forms the centre of this Twelve Hides square which joins on to the Butleigh ley line, and (ii) another ley line from the spot where Wells Cathedral now stands goes through the wattle-church site and forms a diagonal of the square - now it seems that the site of the wattle church was really a rather special spot. A ley crossing and centre of the Twelve Hides, all in one.

What made the builder of the wattle church choose this location, if he did not believe the old lines and holy spots held some power? Surely he would have chosen *any* other site in preference to this. If he had built on what is now the football field, or over by the post office or by the fire station, this question would not have arisen.

So we are forced to the conclusion that the wattle church was sited deliberately at this very special spot. I can think of five possible explanations for this remarkable connection between the earliest Christian church and the old

pagan religion:-

1. This was not really the site of the wattle church at all, but came to be regarded as such (because of pagan legends that it was a holy spot) at a later date when superstition had crept into Christianity. - This theory is in my opinion untenable. The wattle church is not a later invention but dates from extremely early Christian times, which is why it was so especially revered. Its location is clear: it stood until destroyed by fire in 1184, and St. Mary's chapel which we can visit today was built on the same site to replace it in 1186.

2. The builder was deluded by the ancient fables of the old religion. - That seems unlikely if the builder was Joseph, and even more unlikely of Jesus.

3. The old beliefs are not fables: the builder chose this site specially because he knew of the powerful "natural magic" of the place. - This is a plausible theory, but let us look at two further alternatives before we make up our minds.

4. King Arviragus chose the site: we can imagine him telling Joseph, "I'll grant you a piece of land with one of my best magic sites in the middle", and Joseph, full of his new faith, accepted without caring whether the spot was a magic one or not. - I do not find this very convincing: having the whole 1,440 acres of the twelve hides (or at least a goodly part of it) to choose from, Joseph would not have used this site unless he had wanted to.

5. The builder took the "magic" spot deliberately, partly to prevent the pagans from making any further use of it, and partly to win them over, just as some missionaries find even today that if they build a church on a tribe's holy spot, the tribe will show interest, but if they build in what the tribe regards as a place of spiritual dryness, there will be no response. In other words the builder purposely took the old "magic" site but had no intention (just the contrary, indeed) of taking the old magic beliefs.

Of these five alternatives, the third and the fifth seem the most tenable. My own choice is the fifth, but I must leave readers to choose for themselves.

Of all the subjects we have looked at in this chapter one thing is certain: namely that with our present knowledge we can come to no certain conclusions about any of them.

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And this chapter is far from complete: for example no mention has been made of the theory that the "dragon" on many a dragon-path ley line was a spacecraft ("flying saucer", to use the vulgar term) - which would have scared the ancients just as much as a jet plane at low altitude would scare a primitive tribe today. Nor does this chapter contain any mention of the idea that the brilliantly shining Holy Grail was a "flying saucer" and that "knights riding in Quest of the Holy Grail" symbolises men's attempts to bring back the friendly saucer that visited the people no more ... and there are lots of other ideas too.

But here we must leave it.

CHAPTER 6

"GLASTONBURY FAYRE" - OR THE 1971 POP FESTIVAL

Picture green fields stretching down a hillside. Sprinkle the scene with hundreds of tents, and with camp fires here and there. Put into the picture ten thousand young people doing their thing - young men with thick flowing hair falling on their shoulders, young women in long dresses.

At the foot of the hill see a pyramid almost sixty feet high, glistening silver in the light of floodlamps. Hear a "pop" group with electric guitars, drums and other instruments upon a stage on the side of the pyramid, pouring music through amplifiers at a volume audible I should think a couple of miles away. Feel the ground literally tremble with the heavy beat of the music.

On the ground in front of the stage several dozen young people - some naked - dance fast and furious with their hands stretched up towards the pyramid, oblivious of all around. A youth wearing nothing but a headband stands meditating with a fixed stare, unaware of the world.

Another youth wearing fawn shirt and trousers and a headband which makes him look rather like an aristocratic Red Indian emerges from a little tent nearby, records the scene with an expensive camera, and disappears back into his tent.

Noise, DIN, SOUND, THUNDEROUS SOUND from the amplifiers, and the dancers continue to gyrate.

A few local people who have dared to come near this multitude of brightly-coloured creatures from another world stand watching as though they have never seen or heard anything like it before - as I'm sure they haven't! The district wonders what on earth has hit it. People write to the papers, and the local Member of Parliament sees the Secretary of State for the Environment.

This is the midsummer 1971 pop festival held at Worthy Farm near the village of Pilton, six miles from Glastonbury, under the name of "Glastonbury Fayre".

Let us walk around and see what there is to see. There is mud, but not much, for the weather is hot and sunny. There are young people - everywhere - mostly sitting on the ground in groups, and if we join one of these groups, we shall find that they are generally friendly and willing to talk. There is litter, but not much, for there has been a session in which ten thousand people picked up all the litter they could see for five minutes.

There is a grey 1950s style Rolls Royce with a dent in one wing. There is a man with no clothes on riding a motor-cycle. Both the motor-bike and the Rolls must have special permits as no unauthorised motor vehicles are allowed in the field. A couple of the Hell's Angels are there, without their motor-bikes.

Beyond the hedge is a cornfield and it is noticeable that the multitude has generally kept out of this field and has not damaged the corn.

There is a character by the pyramid in a feathered black hat and long black cloak, with a white hen perched clucking on his shoulder. He is said to be a *guru* - a teacher of something or other - but I haven't fathomed out what his message is. One little man with a clearer message leaps up in the midst of the crowd during a brief lull in the music and preaches free forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus at the top of his voice for a couple of minutes, but most of those within earshot just laugh. Then deafening music fills the air once more as a new pop group booms into action.

A young man pushes his way roughly to the foot of the pyramid. He is tall, black-haired and of wild appearance. He dances in a frenzy - surely the human frame cannot stand much of this. He falls to the ground - and at that moment the music stops, whether by design or coincidence I do not know. The young man is carried away to recover. The torrent of music re-starts.

Glastonbury Tor is visible in the distance and I am glad to see it: it reminds me of the peaceful West Country which seems so far removed from the present goings-on.

Across the field there is a second stage near which an older man (a sort of middle-aged hippy) prances about in what looks like a pair of pyjama trousers.

Not far from this second stage are a couple of big white screens onto which ever-changing patterns (like a giant kaleidoscope) are shone at night. Free lentil soup - enough for everybody to have some - is available nearby. (I never found out who financed this: ten thousand bowls of soup don't just appear from nowhere.)

On the far side of the field are the latrines: trenches dug by an excavator and divided into cubicles with lengths of sacking. They strike me as being primitive but just about adequate. I have not noticed any facilities for washing, but there is a queue for water outside the farmhouse on the hill. Water is a rather precious commodity and there are notices up asking everyone not to waste it.

Behind the farmhouse is a bad-trip dome (a dome-shaped temporary building to which anyone suffering bad effects from drugs can be taken to recover) - close to this I see a Jesus tent whose doctrines I have not discovered but I feel somehow that its message is not entirely the same as the gospel of free forgiveness which the little man in the midst of the crowd shouted out.

And reverberating over all is the almost-continuous sound of *that music*.

So the crowd accepts free lentil soup but laughs at the little man's offer of free forgiveness. That's odd, for the little preacher-man is not out of place here: this is supposed to be a spiritual - religious - festival. It is a conscious attempt, timed for the midsummer solstice, to produce some sort of fertility rite. The pyramid is deliberately sited on the Glastonbury-Stonehenge ley line,

and in shape and basic dimensions it is a scale model ($\frac{1}{10}$ actual size) of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. The whole festival is intended to be a gigantic spiritual event.

Mind you, not all the gathered throng sees it that way. Some of those present have never even *heard* of the spiritual facet of the gathering, and are here just for the music - or for other things: I see that one boy has replaced his trousers with a rather small towel and it is quite obvious what he has come for. Some, apparently devoid of any sort of spiritual consciousness, look in disbelief on being told that the festival has a religious side; as did one fellow who, when I asked him about it, enquired in amazement, "Are you stoned?" - which being translated means that he asked me whether I were under the influence of drugs.

A little team of Christians is handing out evangelical literature and seems to be having about the same degree of success as the young magazine-vendor who is asking all and sundry, "Would you like to buy an obscene magazine?" - Some monks are there on a day's "outing" sitting in their robes and holding discussions with the young folk. A negro clergyman is around somewhere. But the scene as a whole is a pagan festival.

These ten thousand are not typical of the young people who have "discovered" Glastonbury as their "spiritual home". Glastonbury does attract numbers of long-haired visitors in summer, and *some* of them are idle layabouts, but those with no insight into the spiritual nature of the place do not survive the Glastonbury winter and the discouragements to their presence which make their way of life less easy than it might be - e.g. the "NO HIPPIES" signs which are to be seen in nearly all the Glastonbury cafés and restaurants.

There are some folk who seek the meaning of life and believe they can find it in Glastonbury, who live throughout the year in the Glastonbury area, often in somewhat rough conditions and despite local opposition. (I am told that one "seeker" furnished a vacant pig-sty and lived in it for five months until he was eventually evicted. On the other hand some of them live in civilised homes and

have regular jobs.) These see Glastonbury as their holy place. Some expect Christ to return on Glastonbury Tor. But the majority of those at the festival were not of this breed.

The inescapable music stops for a minute for some announcements to be given over the amplifiers. "Lonely acid-dealer seeks lively chick for the night: apply back of pyramid", says one. To me that epitomises the mood of a large section of the gathering. (*Translation-note:- "acid-dealer" was the current "in" term for a drug-pusher.*)

After midnight, three crosses about ten feet tall are erected in front of the pyramid. The parallel with Christ's crucifixion is disturbingly evident. The crowd is told to move back, but keeps pressing forward until it is warned that the middle cross is going to explode. The three crosses are set on fire, and their rising flames give an aura of eeriness to the whole scene. Then the fire reaches the chemical with which the hollow middle cross is packed. A great sheet of yellowish flame roars up. It is very impressive and sounds of approval are heard on all sides. The whole happening is well-staged and memorable, but as the flames die down I have no idea what the burning of the three crosses has signified. I suspect no-one else has, either.

The music swells again. It's gone 1.0 a.m., and there's no sign of packing up for the night. I'm going home. Apparently there's a court injunction to prevent them playing amplified music at this hour, but if there is, it is ignored. Someone says they can't lock up ten thousand.

I would have thought the organisers could be in trouble for breach of an injunction, but I suppose they could say they were unable to stop the particular group from playing - and it would be very difficult to tell *which* of the pop groups was responsible unless someone came down to the pyramid to find out. Anyone doing so would certainly be outnumbered! I note there are no police in the field - which is of course private

property - though there are plenty in the approach lanes, directing traffic and being generally good-humoured and helpful. I understand there were some arrests for drug offences outside the festival.

I saw a drug-pusher at work selling drugs by the pyramid. He was an intelligent-looking fellow with beautiful blonde hair, and was dressed as a woman. It struck me that he was worse than a murderer and the human race would be better without him, but as I hesitated, not knowing what to do, he disappeared in the crowd and I never saw him again. Probably there are people in hospitals - or in cemeteries - today as a result of his activities.

This problem of drugs is a difficult one. Different sorts of drugs produce different results - sleeping pills and pep pills for instance are drugs producing opposite results. Two of the nasty ones which cause a lot of damage are LSD (a hallucinatory drug which sometimes lands its users in the mental hospital or causes them to walk over the edges of cliffs) and heroin, from the opium group, which can kill.

Not all drug-users are addicts, of course, any more than all cigarette-smokers are addicts. But they are all in danger of becoming addicts.

There are two forms of addiction: physical and psychological. Physical addiction means that the body will not perform normally without the drug; if the addict is deprived of his drug (or a medical substitute) he will be ill and may become unconscious or may die. Release from physical addiction, provided the patient does not die, only takes a few days.

Psychological addiction, quite separate from physical addiction, is the craving for the drug. This can last for years.

So long as the addict has not done himself a physical or mental injury, it is not as hard as some people imagine to bring him *physically* off drugs - though if he is coming

offheroin he will need constant attention as he is likely to be demented for several hours or days in a terrifying manner, and may suffocate through inhaling his own vomit. Within a few days the body re-adjusts and he becomes physically capable of living a normal life without the drug.

But the greater problem remains: he still has his craving for the drug, and this is likely to last a long time. Consider the position of the average addict who is released from physical dependence: he is likely to be in imperfect health and to have no job and no money. He may have no home, and is likely to have no friends except the people he has been mixing with over the last few months. So back he goes to them - and they are the very crowd in which he became addicted to drugs in the first place. Sooner or later he will end up back in hospital to be "de-toxicated" again.

At least one religious organisation has had some success in dealing with this problem. If the addict when he has been released from physical dependence can be made to see - and really to believe with all his heart - that by his throwing himself on the mercy of Jesus his past has been forgiven *and so he will go to Heaven*, he will have such a motivation to serve the Christ who has saved him and to spread the story of what God has done for him, that he will suddenly have an *ambition* to become a social worker - or a minister or a missionary - or even an honest working man - and for the love of God (and with God's help) he'll do it. He'll start a new life in a new circle of friends, and as long as his new friends look after him he is unlikely to drift back to his old haunts. After a period of several years, the cure is complete. Not all cases work out as well as this, but some do.

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The festival lasted for the greater part of a week. It did not come to any especially-startling climax, and when it was over the multitude left, some riding, some walking, some hitch-hiking; although some of them took more than twenty-four hours to get away:

they'd enjoyed themselves so much they were loath to leave.

In 1973 a film "Glastonbury Fayre" taken at the 1971 festival was shown. It had an "X" certificate.

There have been other festivals and attempts at festivals in the Glastonbury area, but this midsummer 1971 gathering is the one which, albeit arousing emotions ranging almost from ecstasy to apoplexy, is remembered - will never be forgotten by those who willingly or unwillingly were within range - is already becoming a legend.

CHAPTER 7

GLASTONBURY TODAY - AND WHAT ABOUT TOMORROW?

Overheard in a Glastonbury café:- "I was a furniture salesman till a week ago, and I found I was hassling for a pay-rise - and I thought, *It's the rat-race - it's got me!* - so I shaved my head, asked my employer to release me from my contract, and came to Glastonbury."

Whether that particular gentleman found what he was looking for in Glastonbury I do not know. I suspect he did not: he remained there several months, part of which he spent serving refreshments in the café off the Lamb car-park where I first encountered him, and then he departed.

By shaving his head he was an exception: most Glastonbury visitors of his ilk have "longer than average" hair. Many of the local people lump them all together, shaggy or shorn, under the general title of "the hippies" - a classification which most of its recipients do not welcome. "We're not hippies; we're pilgrims," complained one little girl in the group. Sometimes they call themselves the New Glastonbury Community. These youngsters (they're mostly in their teens and twenties, though some are older) are in sharp contrast to many of the pop-festival hippies, though they dress similarly and on the surface it may be hard to see the difference. (In fairness it must be said that not all their adherents are long-hairs: some look quite conservative, which gives them the advantage that they can get service in the shops displaying "NO HIPPIES" signs - though often they choose not to patronise these businesses.) These members of the "alternative society" have come to Glastonbury in a spirit of seeking something. Just what is being sought varies from individual to individual. We will have another look at them later in this chapter.

The atmosphere of the town and its past attracts not only these. There come also pilgrimages of Anglicans,

Roman Catholics and other beliefs; and archaeologists, students of architecture, students of Atlantis, ley hunters, occultists, chanters of Hare Krishna - the town attracts them all. Any stranger who moves to the town knowing nothing of its nature soon discovers that he is in no ordinary town.

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Imagine a pair of typical(?) newcomers to the town, Fred Smith and his wife Florrie. They are moving down from Yorkshire and have no idea that Glastonbury is anything other than an ordinary Somerset market-town.

After they have lived in the town twelve months Fred says, "When we came here I wondered if there'd ever be anything special going on - a carnival or anything like that - but I've seen a dozen things I'd call special. On average that's one a month - though there are more in summer than in winter of course. And ten out of twelve have got something to do with the legends."

In this chapter let us look at the twelve events in Glastonbury and district (all of them occurring more or less annually, though they are not all *guaranteed* to happen every year) which Fred calls "special".

1: (JANUARY) THE GLASTONBURY THORN

Moving on New Year's Eve into their little detached house in Leg of Mutton Road (yes, there *is* such a road in Glastonbury - though Fred and Florrie Smith are fictitious characters and no resemblance to any real person living or dead is intended) Fred and Florrie will probably notice nothing out of the ordinary, beyond the annual celebrations with which any and every town brings in the new year. For the next four days, in between unpacking china and arranging and re-arranging furniture, they have time to notice the tranquillity of the surrounding countryside, and how much warmer it is than where they have come from, but there is no particular hint of anything unusual. But on 5th. January (Old Christmas Day) as Florrie goes down to the shops she sees a surprising sight: a thorn tree is in full blossom in the

churchyard. People come to see it, and a sprig is sent to Her Majesty the Queen. The Glastonbury Thorn (given good weather - otherwise it may be a few days late!) has performed its annual miracle. (Even if late, a thorn which blossoms in January as well as in May is astonishing.)

2: (MARCH) THE TIDES

By the time he has lived in Glastonbury two months our friend Fred has discovered that the town is on the edge of the very low-lying Sedgemoor Plain which stretches to the sea, and that wandering over the plain are several rivers, the largest of which is the Parrett which runs past the foot of King Alfred's Mump ten miles south-west of Glastonbury and then flows through Bridgwater and meanders on to enter the Bristol Channel at Burnham-on-Sea. The Bristol Channel is noted for its high tides, and though these cannot now affect Glastonbury except in the highly unlikely event of a major breach in the sea-wall, they reached and sometimes surrounded the town in former times. So Fred quite rightly treats them as an important piece in the jigsaw of Glastonbury's history, and drives across (one cannot say "down") to the coast to see them. The Bristol Channel tides are the highest in Europe, and the second highest in the world, being exceeded only by those of the Bay of Fundy in America.

About the time of the equinox (late March and again in late September) when these tides reach their highest, numbers of sight-seers will be on the sea-fronts at the seaside resorts - particularly at Weston-super-Mare where these "spring tides" can reach a height of forty-two feet. If there is a south-westerly gale behind them they are higher, and occasionally traffic has to be diverted away from the Weston sea-front. At such times as these, only the sea-wall prevents the tide from reaching Glastonbury.

The large tide-range makes it impossible for boats - even small ones - to approach Weston at low water, and it was partly because of this difficulty that an

experimental hovercraft service was inaugurated between Weston and Penarth (South Wales) in 1963. Though the service lasted only one summer, it had the distinction of being the first hovercraft service carrying fare-paying passengers in the world.

The powerful tides are responsible for the Severn bore and also for the smaller bore which forces its way up the River Parrett to beyond Bridgwater, and which nearly upset Oliver Cromwell in 1645. The quay near Bridgwater town bridge is a good vantage-point for watching the bore, and the local newspaper "Bridgwater Mercury" usually tells us what time it is due. As we await its coming, the muddy water at the foot of the even muddier banks is flowing downstream. Then the crested breaking wave appears running rapidly up-river. When it has passed us the water is noticeably deeper and is flowing strongly upstream.

3: (EASTER) BRITISH ISRAEL

At Easter our friends Fred and Florrie will see the arrival of the first of the various religious organisations which regard Glastonbury as something special. The British Israel movement (which believes that the British are the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel which were scattered in the eighth century B.C.) meets in the town hall.

4: (MAY DAY) DRUIDS

On the morning of 1st. May, druids hold a procession and ceremony on the Tor. The ceremony takes about an hour and is a colourful spectacle with the druids in their white robes and other partakers in robes of various colours. Ritual words are repeated, and banners and a sword are held aloft. Druids also hold midsummer-sunrise ceremonies at Stonehenge.

5: (END OF MAY/BEGINNING OF JUNE) THE BATH AND WEST SHOW

This very large agricultural show, held outside the town of Shepton Mallet about nine miles from Glastonbury, is one

of the biggest events in the West Country, attracting annually many thousands of people, It has no particular connection with the Glastonbury legends but the whole of Sedgemoor is included in the agricultural area which the show serves. The event lasts several days, and includes such attractions as cattle and sheep, sheepdog trials, sheep-shearing, parachute displays, and a large number of stalls at which anything from a brooch to a swimming-pool can be purchased.

Other shows and events are held from time to time on the same site.

6: (MID-JUNE) THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PILGRIMAGE

It is strange how different groups of people can sometimes emphasise quite different details of a given situation. We have seen how the original wattle church was held in special reverence because it had stood from earliest Christian times and had perhaps been built by Christ Himself during His sojourn at what is now Glastonbury; and we have seen how St. David is said to have been warned not to re-dedicate the wattle church as Christ had Himself dedicated it to His mother. A Roman Catholic booklet, "The Story of Glastonbury", by Dom Aelred Watkin, a monk of Downside Abbey, puts this story in a different light, showing the wattle church much more as a shrine sacred to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The ancient wattle structure was known, he points out, as the Church of Our Lady in the eighth century or earlier, and so sacred was this Wattle Church of Our Lady that neither Saxon nor Dane destroyed it, and after the 1184 fire this was the first part of the abbey to be rebuilt. Within the wattle church was a very ancient statue of Our Lady, which survived the fire. Many pilgrims visited this shrine, and the wife of King Edward III in the fourteenth century gave to this statue a silver rosary with *paternoster* beads of pure gold. It is thought that the Virgin (seated holding her Child) shown on the abbey coat of arms is an illustration of this statue.

After the dissolution in 1539 the statue vanished:

there is no record of its destruction but conversely there is nothing to show a likelihood of its having been preserved.

After the dissolution too the pilgrimages ended, but there are signs that the memory of Our Lady's shrine never quite perished, and that Catholics continued to gather for prayer, in secret if need be, around the ruin of the St. Mary's chapel. But the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries have seen a return of Roman Catholicism to Glastonbury.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Fathers of the Sacred Heart opened a novitiate in Glastonbury, in 1904 a convent came to the town, and in 1920 a chapel was built - a chapel which was replaced by the present Roman Catholic church which was consecrated in 1941.

On 20th. July 1955 the Apostolic-Delegate, Archbishop O'Hara, blessed and enthroned a new statue of Our Lady of Glastonbury in the church. In the presence of 18,000 Catholics he thus restored the ancient shrine. In 1965 this statue was solemnly crowned by the Apostolic-Delegate in the presence of a huge gathering, and Mass was said in the abbey ruins - a Roman Catholic service on Church of England premises. The occasion was described as historic, and if the body of an early saint who never crowned a statue, but received by faith in Christ a glorious eternal crown, happened to turn in his grave, no-one noticed.

The crowned statue stands above the altar in the Roman Catholic church in front of a painting which depicts various Glastonbury saints, including Joseph of Arimathea, Patrick, David, Dunstan, Benignus (who appears later in this chapter) and Whiting the martyred last abbot.

An annual pilgrimage (not necessarily including a procession) to the shrine takes place in June, but in addition to this parties of Catholic pilgrims come throughout the year. In 1958 when special indulgences were granted they came in thousands.

7: (21st. JUNE) THE ESSENES

The Brotherhood of the Essenes claims that it appears on earth every two thousand years, shortly before the happening of some great event. It has been coming to Glastonbury now for about the last half-century, always on 21st. June.

Its meeting begins in late evening - after 11.0 p.m. - in the Glastonbury town hall. The very high regard which Essenes have for animals, especially dogs, is emphasised at this gathering. Members of the Brotherhood are vegetarians by nature, and they believe that animals were created without the power of speech in order to test mankind, which in its present state cannot tune in to the animals' wavelength. They criticise sharply such activities as factory-farming.

From the town hall the gathering moves off in the direction of the Tor. The Tor, they believe, is a most important magnetic or cosmic power point, and is the doorway where the solar forces and terrestrial currents meet. These powers were formerly controlled through the Great Pyramid of Egypt - so we see that they bear a remarkable similarity to some of the powers we considered in chapter 5.

At true midnight (i.e. at 1.0 a.m. BST) the Tor doorway is used by angels who have (according to Essenes' beliefs) a duty to perform in connection with these forces. This moment is the end of the old and the beginning of the new solar year, so the angels must pass through the Tor and check their positions at the earth's cosmic points, and in this task the co-operation of the initiated Essenes is necessary. The red-robed participants form a circle in farmland to the east of the Tor (the ceremony does not take place on the Tor itself) and a short ritual is performed in complete darkness.

The duties fulfilled, torches and lamps come on again, and refreshments for all are provided at the town hall, after which the Essenes depart for their homes,

which means for many of them London or the Midlands.

8: (MIDSUMMER NIGHT) ARTHUR'S NIGHT

On this night, it is said, the hoofbeats of Arthur's horsemen can be heard at Cadbury Camp, the reputed Camelot, a dozen miles south-east of Glastonbury. Legend assures us that a silver horseshoe was once picked up the following morning, therefore it must be so. But as no-one can produce the horseshoe or any other convincing evidence (see page 77) I must be cautious, for the enthusiastic reader who endures a midsummer-night vigil in drizzling rain on top of Cadbury Camp to hear nothing more than the fleeing hoofbeats of a cow into which he has stumbled in the dark, will not thank me. I feel safest in describing the alleged ride as Avalon's annual non-event.

Confusing the issue in true Glastonbury-legend fashion, one writer insists that the event does not take place at midsummer but on Christmas Eve.

9: (A SATURDAY AFTERNOON IN LATE JUNE) THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PILGRIMAGE

Any stranger in the town at about three o'clock on this Saturday afternoon knows that something is about to happen, for the High Street becomes crowded with spectators and is closed to traffic. This pilgrimage is without doubt the great religious event of the year for Glastonbury. Coachloads come many miles to attend. Hundreds of lay people and clergy participate, and process along the High Street from St. John's Parish Church to the abbey ruins.

Though this is an Anglican pilgrimage, it belongs very much to the High Church sector of the denomination. Nearly every priest - and there are many dozens of them - is resplendent in his cope or other costly vestments, and is accompanied by a couple of choristers as acolytes and another bearing aloft the beautifully-embroidered church banner. Candles flicker, held aloft in special long-handled lanterns. Incense wafts over the procession and the watchers. The Bishop of Bath and Wells in his

regalia takes part in the proceedings. The organ of the Parish Church booms out over the High Street through the big amplifiers which have been set up along the street for the occasion. A hymn is sung by the processing pilgrims. As the hymn ends, the brightly-coloured procession is still issuing from the church. Another hymn is sung ... and ends - and still they come: a seemingly unending stream of more and still more clergy; a vivid sight with the bright and varied hues of the vestments and banners, interspersed with the black and white (and sometimes other colours) of their attendants' robes - and the hymn is sung again.

Then the laity. Ordinary people, young and old. Some with young children in pushchairs. A few hippies are in the processing throng, and some Anglican nuns and a few monks. Through the great archway of the abbey gatehouse they go, into the ruins, where a service is held.

As the spectators disperse, the police officers work to restore the traffic-flow to normal. Then after the service the pilgrims depart in their coaches and cars, leaving Glastonbury with its most vivid annual reminder of its past glories, for another year.

10: (FROM LATE JUNE TO EARLY AUGUST)

"MIRACLE" PLAYS IN THE ABBEY RUINS

An innovation dating from 1970 is a six-week season of "miracle" plays held in the abbey ruins. There is no stage, no curtain - the action takes place on the grass by the ruins of the eastern arch. For the audience a few dozen seats are provided, but those without seats (or disdaining them) can sit on the grassy slopes which rise like a little amphitheatre around the site of the Edgar chapel.

Not all the plays have a Glastonbury theme, but the dozen or so plays which were performed during the first four seasons included (1971) "The Play of Whyting" (*the last abbot*); (1972) "The Play of Arthur" and (1973) "The Play of the Legends".

"The Play of the Legends" was my first experience of the Glastonbury "miracle" plays. I went expecting that the play would have little connection with any of the stories in this book. It was advertised as "a new Glastonbury Pageant play with danced interludes by American Dancers at Glastonbury". I was pleasantly surprised. Its author Kenneth Janes (of New York, but born in Glastonbury) has produced an entertaining play without doing violence to the history of the place.

At the beginning of the play King Henry II (the rebuilder of the abbey after the 1184 fire) and his Queen, walking in the ruins, run into a twentieth-century party of tourists led by a little guide who says the legends are not to be believed! Henry rebukes her, and as the play continues Joseph of Arimathaea and Arthur and others appear before us and re-enact their stories. Joseph shows us the Grail chalice and two cruets with the blood and sweat of the Lord Jesus, and then we see Arthur (played interestingly by the same actor as Joseph) seeking the Grail and eventually returning his Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake. Dancing, mediaeval music and humour were interspersed, and the whole production was (despite the rain) so enjoyable that I went again two nights later.

As well as being author of "The Play of the Legends", Kenneth Janes is founder and artistic director of the whole "miracles" series, and has created a tradition which, it is hoped, will long continue.

11: (A SATURDAY EVENING IN EARLY NOVEMBER) THE CARNIVAL

This celebration has no direct connection with the Glastonbury legends but is probably the town's biggest event of the year. The procession is much larger than the Church of England pilgrimage procession, but is of a quite different kind, consisting in the main of carnival floats.

The typical Glastonbury carnival float is a farm

tractor towing the biggest trailer the farm can provide, the trailer being decorated with some colourful pageant-scene or an item of topical or humorous interest, the whole scene being brilliantly illuminated by hundreds of electric light bulbs supplied with power by a dynamo mounted on a small second trailer attached to the rear of the first. Most floats also have some form of musical accompaniment such as records or a tape-recording.

It goes without saying that while the procession of several dozen of these two-trailer tractor-trains makes the circuit of the town at walking speed, all other traffic comes to a complete standstill.

Subjects for the floats are not based on the legends. A theme connected with the legends, such as "A Scene from the Life of Henry VIII" might creep in, but more typical examples of subjects are "Snow White", "The Common Market" and "The Channel Tunnel". The floats are particularly notable for the care and skill with which they are made and illuminated. The appearance of a brightly-shining green dragon some fifteen feet high with a long red tongue and a pair of green gauze wings, looking fearsome and ferocious, yet somehow attractive and rather friendly, which glided along the street in the first Glastonbury carnival I saw, will stay in my memory a long time.

Another feature which has my admiration is the way the drivers take such large vehicles round some of the sharper corners in the town. Presumably they have plenty of practice throughout the year on farm gateways!

Many of the floats also go to Bridgwater and to other Somerset towns to take part in the carnivals there. The Bridgwater one is a widely-known affair which takes place on a Thursday evening close to Guy Fawkes' Day, and such crowds fill the narrow Bridgwater main street on carnival night that it is normal for some of the shop windows to be boarded up

the afternoon before the procession, to protect them from damage.

The Bridgwater event is followed by "squibbing": a tradition in which "Bridgwater squibs" (which are some of the largest fireworks I have ever come across) are held above the head on long poles. The origin of the tradition is unknown, but the teams of men who take part in it wear their oldest clothes (knowing that holes will probably be burnt in them) and look to me uncommonly like the Duke of Monmouth's ragged army which marched out of the town into disaster in 1685. So far as I know there is no connection but sometimes I wonder if there might have been...

It would be unfair to mention Bridgwater carnival without mentioning that other widely-known annual event, Bridgwater fair, held a few weeks before the carnival, i.e. just before the end of September. It originated as a mediaeval trading fair, and this side of it continues, with sales of livestock, and a vast number of portable stalls selling all manner of small goods, but the main attraction today is the funfair: an annual concourse of roundabouts, dodgems, sideshows and all the other "fun of the fair". Coaches come from as far afield as Bristol to visit it.

12: (ALL THE YEAR ROUND) "THE ALTERNATIVE SOCIETY"

They are mostly young, and a lot of them are rather intelligent. They are "anti" the synthetic society and its man-made metropoli in which everything seems to be processed and packed in plastic or polythene; they favour natural foods and compost gardening. Some of them are vegetarians. This is "the alternative society" alternative to the nine-to-five-plus-telly-in-the-evenings materialistic society in which so many of us live.

There is a mood of seeking-for-an-alternative in many a town today. It is particularly marked among the Glastonbury alternative community but it is certainly not confined to them.

It is a mood which says, "What has science brought us but trouble? - nuclear bombs, pollution, mile upon mile of ruined landscape: and medical science has brought a flood of over-population. Where is the mad rush heading for? And what is the point of getting there anyway?"

Those who decide that the present society offers no worthwhile future can either carry on in a purposeless existence in which their chief aim is to enjoy each day as it comes, or look for an alternative. For alternatives, some seek contentment in a commune dedicated to simplicity. Some in every large town and city devote themselves to social or political activism, trying to improve or change the system. Some drop out into a chemically-induced unreal world of drugs. A few take a completely negative "I-hate-all-of-it-let's-go-and-smash-it" approach. Some find paths ignored by science, in the various practices of the occult. Some by their religious faith know a Redeemer and a purpose in life, and try to do their share to lighten the darkness as they pass through on their way home.

Those in Glastonbury study ley lines and labyrinths, astrology and Arthur, the "High History" and Professor Tolkein's "Hobbit". From time to time they hold meetings to which they invite visiting speakers on these subjects. One of their chief characteristics is their friendliness, and they do not limit this to their own group. I have found them as willing to be amiable towards a white-collar man in a grey suit as to a bearded and bearded "wierdie" clad in a smock. Now and then one of them proves to be bad, but this is true of the rest of the human race too. (But members of "the alternative society" may get a bit more publicity.) Nevertheless there are plenty of people in Glastonbury who do not like them, and now and then a problem flares up.

Even if a man's home consists of a caravan which is standing *illegally* on the grass verge of the highway at the foot of the Tor, he is apt to be a bit put out if while he is at work he is suddenly deprived of it. "I

wasn't doing any harm," he might say, gazing at the empty space where his home had stood, "And I've nowhere else to sleep tonight". To tell him that his kind are not welcome in Glastonbury is rather like telling Moslems not to go to Mecca! To remind him that other people pay rent, and that his caravan was breaking the law (which is true) does not solve his immediate problem. He could go to the County Council rest centre, but this means going away from the Tor, away from the holy town, out of the twelve hides.

In the stress of the moment a train of events may begin which leads to him not only losing his home but also appearing before the local magistrates: and people hearing of his case may say, "What wicked people these hippies are!"

The local council (i.e. the old council abolished by the 1974 local government re-organisation) tried various tactics including the depositing of what was said to be processed sewage sludge in certain places, to discourage such persons as the caravan-dwellers from staying. Their efforts made headlines: the local newspaper "The Central Somerset Gazette" called the affair "the starve 'em stink 'em out campaign", and a national Sunday paper reported the story under the (quite inaccurate) headline of "HOLY STINK FOR JESUS FREAKS".

The problem is not new to Glastonbury. Over nineteen centuries ago some men came: they were not local and they followed a new religion which the local king, Arviragus, did not believe in. Instead of trying to discourage them Arviragus gave them a piece of land and let them settle. It seems to have been a wise move.

Why, despite the opposition, do they stay? Mostly because they believe there is no other place on earth quite like Glastonbury. Some see it as an important occult centre. Some instinctively know that the spirit of what they are seeking is there, and that it is a place of "good vibrations". Some are interested in one or more aspects of the legends, some believe the

district holds a secret that could change the world, some expect Christ to return on the Tor.

This recently-developed legend that Jesus is coming one day upon the Tor seems to need a word of explanation. No-one has given me a coherent one, but I have found the following circumstances:-

1. Christ is Biblically prophesied to return, but on another Mount - the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem.
2. The warrior chief Arthur has been deified by legend and it is said he will return on the Tor, or at Camelot, or elsewhere. The Christians' promise that Jesus will return seems to have been transferred, by local tradition, to the people's great hero Arthur.
3. Sagittarius in the zodiac is a picture of the redeemer Christ, but became changed by legend into Hercules, and was further changed in the Somerset zodiac into the deified Arthur. A garbled message leading to confusion between Arthur, the man regarded as a god, and Jesus, the God who became man.
4. A great leader is to be expected, say those who believe in astrology, for we are entering the age of aquarius, and every age has its outstanding leader. As the dawn of the piscean age brought Christ, so the advent of the aquarian age will bring someone, somewhere - and the Tor is on the figure of aquarius in the Somerset zodiac.
5. It has been said that Glastonbury's original twelve hides are a picture of the whole world "in microcosm". Just as in the "High History" Arthur's exploits from Cornwall to Scotland are portrayed within (or close to) the ten-mile circle of the Somerset zodiac, so, by somewhat similar symbolism, with the twelve hides representing the world, the Tor might just conceivably represent the Mount of Olives. Each side of the square of the Glaston Twelve Hides is (as we saw on page 140) one and a half miles - i.e. 7920ft. And the mean diameter of the earth is 7920 miles.
6. It seems that St Mary's chapel and/or the Twelve

Hides may in some way be symbolic of the New Jerusalem described in the Book of Revelation. The line W-X in fig. 18 is 79.20ft. long. 100 x 79.20ft. is 7,920ft., i.e. twelve furlongs or one and a half miles, equal in length (though not in position) to one side of the Twelve Hides square. 1,000 x 7,920ft. is 12,000 furlongs which is the size of the New Jerusalem given in Revelation 21, 16. These matters are examined in John Michell's book, "City of Revelation".

7. Melkin in the fifth century A.D. made a mysterious reference to "Jehoshaphat" - a place of unknown location as we observed on page 27 - and it is possible to interpret this reference as an allusion to either Jerusalem or Glastonbury. Already we have seen (page 27) that what Melkin says has been taken as part-basis for a most unlikely claim that the Blessed Virgin Mary was buried at Glastonbury. So: we have Melkin inferring (in his usual indefinite and unsatisfactory way) that Jehoshaphat is Glastonbury, and the prophet Joel says in the Old Testament (*Joel 3, 12*) that the Lord will sit in judgment in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Taken with all the other Biblical prophecies of the Second Coming, Joel's prophecy appears to refer to some spot in the Jerusalem region. Therefore it seems that either Melkin meant Jerusalem or there are two Jehoshaphats.

There may be other reasons for this Second-Coming-at-Glastonbury legend which I have not come across. But this mixture of circumstances is quite sufficient to set a legend on its feet!

When we compare such a claim as this with the Bible's claim as to the Second Coming of Christ, we can see how much stronger the scriptural claim is. There are over eight hundred prophecies of the coming of the Messiah in the Bible. Three hundred of them tell of a suffering Messiah and the other five hundred portray a glorious Messiah - they seem so different that, more than two millennia ago, discussion of the possibility that there might be two Messiahs was not unknown among God's people the Jews.

Jesus fulfilled every one of the three hundred

prophecies - but he did not fulfil the five hundred, and the Jews rejected Him. At His trial He told the Jewish leaders (*Matthew 26, 64*) that they would see Him with power and coming in glory. In this glorious Second Coming the unfulfilled prophecies will be fulfilled.

For many years, cranks of various types have been making attempts to put a date to the end of this age, the day when Christ will return. I am not going to join them! They have nearly all overlooked an aspect of Christ's teaching on the subject. In Luke 21, 24, Jesus foretells that the Jews will be led away captive into all nations (which happened in 70 A.D.) and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the gentiles (the non-Jews) until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled. But in the same conversation, as reported to us by Matthew, Jesus prophesies that the Temple will be thrown down (*Matthew 24, 2; similar to Luke 21, 6*) and then He tells us (*Matthew 24, 14-21*):- "The Gospel will be preached throughout the world, then the end will come: so when you see the abomination of desolation (*this seems to mean the statue of the antichrist spoken of in Revelation 13, 14-15*) in the holy place (*i.e. the inner part of the Jerusalem Temple*) let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountains ... and you should pray that it won't be on the Sabbath..."

So: the *Temple* thrown down ... the Gospel preached ... then the end will come and when you see the "abomination" in the *Temple* those in Judaea should flee...

So it becomes apparent that when "the end" comes the Temple will have been rebuilt and Jewish practices with their Sabbath-observances will be taking place again in the Judaea (Jerusalem and southern Israel) region.

The Jews were defeated and were scattered from their homeland in 70 A.D.; thenceforth they were geographically a people without a country right down

to the twentieth century. So long as this state of affairs continued and Jerusalem was in the hands of the gentiles, conditions were not right for the end of the age and the Second Coming to take place.

In 1948 the state of Israel was set up. The Jew was back in his Promised Land. The Arab nations immediately attacked. Israel miraculously survived. There was another war in 1956; the Suez Canal was blocked but Israel again survived. 1967 saw the Six Day War: the Suez Canal was blocked again - and remained so to June 1975 - but, far more important, the Jews regained the old city of Jerusalem from Arab hands. For the first time since 70 A.D. the way is open for the Jews to rebuild their Temple on its ancient site and for God to wind up the story of this age.

In 1973 the Jews survived another attack which served as a further warning of what is to come.

Some students of the Bible say that God started His final countdown for "the end" in the first century A.D., but, just as the countdown for launching a spaceship can be stopped (e.g. for equipment to be adjusted) and later re-started, so God stopped His countdown in 70 A.D. and has only just re-started it.

Dr. Bullinger, at the end of his book in which he sets out his theory on the zodiac, adds a speculation regarding eclipses, seeing them as *signs* as spoken of in Genesis 1, 14. He then gives the dates of certain historical events, and linking these to eclipses he concludes in his book (published in 1896) that something important should happen in 1897. His forecast came true: 1897 saw the holding of the First Zionist Congress at Basle. Though the importance of this Congress was not widely recognised at the time, it was later seen to have been a major step towards the founding of the state of Israel.

Looking a little further into these interpretations of Biblical prophecies that we have been considering, we find that further events for us to look out for as

warnings that God's countdown is in progress are:-

1: The rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple on its ancient site. (That site is at present occupied by the Dome of the Rock, the second holiest place of the Moslems; and there has already been at least one attempt to "dispose of" the Dome, to assist in the fulfilment of this prophecy.)

2: A ten-nation confederacy which is symbolised in the Book of Revelation as a beast with ten horns. The Common Market is at present nine nations. Look out for a tenth to join!

3: Yet another war in the Middle East. (The prophet Joel foresees such a war in Joel 3 - the mysterious "Jehoshaphat" chapter.) God's promise in Genesis 15, 18 that the Jews would receive the land "from the river of Egypt to the River Euphrates" has not yet been fulfilled - but it may be that this will not come to pass until after the millennium (the thousand years of peace which will follow Christ's return) has begun.

4: Joel (who packs a great deal into his difficult-to-understand little book) tells us (*Joel 2, 28*) that God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. If this prophecy conjours up no clear picture in our minds, let us look at St. Peter's explanation of it on the first Whitsunday - he points to the disciples who are causing public astonishment by speaking boldly and fluently in languages they have never learnt (i.e. "speaking in tongues") and says (*Acts 2, 16*):- This is what Joel predicted: in the last days, says God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh...

Someone may object that Peter lived over nineteen centuries ago and so he wasn't in the last days. Yet we have seen that in a way he was. After Christ ascended into heaven God began the last chapter of this age, but soon He stopped His countdown and inserted a long intermission, "the times of the gentiles".

So in the last days we are to see this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, evidenced as Peter tells us by

wondrous signs including speaking in tongues. Fantastic? Maybe, but it has been happening for over fifty years in the Pentecostal denominations of the Christian Church.

Without getting carried away we can safely say (as we look at the world's population-explosion, worldwide pollution, the Middle East problem, and the general international political situation) that the world is in a pickle more closely resembling the turmoil described in the Bible for "the last days" than ever before.

There are people in Glastonbury who know this, and a lot of them are not members of "the alternative society".

It is intriguing to see how the return of the Jews to Israel (for the last days) and the speaking-in-tongues movement (sign of the last days) have run parallel. In 1897 came the First Zionist Congress; in 1900, the movement which was to grow into the Pentecostal denominations began in America. (The "tongues" phenomenon was known previously: it is said that this gift was possessed by some of the early Quakers, and by eighteenth-century Huguenot protestants in France, and by various other scattered groups and/or individuals - but it is only in the twentieth century that it has gathered momentum.) In 1948 the Jews returned into Israel, and in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the charismatic movement (as this movement of the Holy Spirit is now called) gradually burst forth beyond the bounds of the Pentecostal Churches: Anglicans, Baptists, Roman Catholics and many other Christians in many countries now have this "sign of the last days". (A few of them have been to Glastonbury.)

In this movement we see the truly supernatural aspect of Christianity in action. Those who seek the supernatural through the occult (whether in Glastonbury or elsewhere) are sailing dangerous channels: it should only be approached in the way God

has ordained, and the way is not widely known as the Church has kept it in the attic for many many years and is only just beginning to re-discover it; but it is there in the charismatic movement - including prophecy and divine healing as well as changed lives. There is an opportunity for the Church to make a great advance here, but caution is needed - just as the first railway engines were a great advance on the horse, but incautiously used they could spread horror and harm around with a loud bang.

As an evangelical protestant, the first time I met a Roman Catholic priest who claimed to have this charismatic experience I questioned him at some length. I was delighted to find that his beliefs were the same as mine: he used to think that he had to do good to please God, but he had realised that this was not so: he had given up trying to make himself good enough for God and had realised that by relying on Christ the Saviour for salvation he would be alright, and that doing good would follow as a result. He had God's truth in Christ, and the Holy Spirit - and it showed in the joy on his face. That's Christianity. Going to church every Sunday and participating in the church fund-raising activities and a bit of (or even a lot of) general doing-good is not Christianity.

Quite separately from the prophecies which we have been looking at, the Bible teaches (*1 Corinthians 15, 51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4, 16-17*) the doctrine of "the Rapture", saying that all who have been saved will suddenly be taken from this earth to be forever with the Lord. It happens "in the twinkling of an eye": God does not intend that any of us shall have the slightest warning of when this is going to happen. It does not have to wait until all the prophecies discussed above are fulfilled; indeed there seem to be no outstanding prophecies which must necessarily be fulfilled before "the Rapture" can take place. This ties in quite properly with Dr. Bullinger's point which we saw on page 121, that when Christ comes in glory to judge mankind, His redeemed people are already safe

with Him. As I write this, God's offer of salvation is still open...

Christians have a future. Many a non-Christian forecaster looks at the sad state of this world and no longer sees a future. There is no joy in rejecting the Christian message and having no hope.

The way to be saved is easy to describe: it can be set out as "the three 'R's" - repent, receive, rely. *Repent* means more than being sorry. If as you read this book you know quite well you really ought to be doing the washing-up, *repentance* means *go and do the washing-up*. It means being sorry and being ready to put things right. Until this is our frame of mind we are not ready for the other two 'R's.

Receive means to take what is offered. Here is a Glastonbury example: if while climbing the Tor I catch my foot in a rabbit-hole and break my ankle, the chances are that very quickly a couple of extremely kind ambulance-men will come to my rescue with a stretcher. "How much do you charge?" I ask suspiciously. "Nothing at all, sir: it's free on the National Health Service." But they will not be able to help me if I refuse to let them near me, saying, "Too good to be true: I don't believe it," - or - "I'll get out of this mess by my own efforts, thankyou," - or - "Clear off; you're sure to hurt me!" - Before they can take me to safety I must receive them and submit to them. Receiving Christ is the same: as long as I ignore or oppose Him He will not force me to be rescued.

And *relying* on Christ? Having initially submitted to the ambulance-men I have to rely on them all the way to the hospital - and as they carry me down the Tor some of the going will be pretty rough! Similarly we need to rely on Christ's support every step of the way, through rough and smooth on the path of life.

I find that this idea of conversion - which is so obvious once the light dawns - is a real difficulty for

some people. They seem unable to grasp the point by ordinary logical thinking. Somehow the way the human mind works, coupled with their preconceived notions that the subject is emotional and/or illogical, make it impossible for them to reach the desired conclusion by logical steps. My advice here is, rely on God's mercy and accept the conclusion by faith. Looking back from that point one can find that the logical steps are now clear, and it was only some quirk of the human brain that prevented them from being seen before.

We can find an exact parallel to this at Glastonbury. If you climb the Tor and try to pick out Burrow Mump (King Alfred's Fort at Burrowbridge) you will find, if you have normal eyesight, that in ordinary weather-conditions you cannot see it - though you may spot the old windmill on the hill in roughly the same direction, and may mistake this momentarily for the Mump. The logical conclusion of the experiment may seem to be that the Tor and the Mump cannot be seen from one another. But if you drive to Burrowbridge and climb the Mump you will find that the Tor can be seen with no trouble at all. Try it for yourself.

The same principle applies to conversion: first accept the message and become a sheep in God's flock for better or worse by faith: the logical facts which could have led you there become clear when viewed from the arrival-point.

Once you have taken the plunge, it's like being on the inside of King Arthur's fortress - we're in the courtyard. The enemy can send things over the ramparts which may make life uncomfortable for us, but he cannot destroy us.

Some people stay in the courtyard all their lives: we call them spiritual babies. The whole fortress is at our disposal, with its banqueting-hall, library, chapel, and all other facilities. These are good - but

these do not save. The vital point is, we are inside. That saves.

One day the portcullis will crash down and the drawbridge come rattling up, and on that day only one question will matter: "Are you inside?"

What has all this to do with Glastonbury? But this *is* the message of Glastonbury! And the future of the Glastonbury story must stem from here, or else Glastonbury will not be taking the most worthwhile course open to it. This is the news that brought Joseph of Arimathaea to this land, the gospel which led to the founding of the abbey, the good news that inspired Arthur. These are the glad tidings preached by the early saints who raised the forerunners of those gothic edifices which now stand as markers on many a ley-line. This is the ancient message in the zodiac - and the message for today which, rightly used, could be the antidote for the malaise affecting our plastic-wrapped materialistic twentieth-century world which causes thinking young people to try to escape into "the alternative society". The twentieth century is the odd one out: in previous centuries mankind has used, or misused, his religion: it is only twentieth-century man who has chosen to *ignore* his religion.

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People seem to realise Glastonbury is a strangely special place, which is why from time to time various plans are put forward: e.g. to rebuild the abbey as it was in 1539 (the year of the dissolution); to set up a Wagnerian centre; to found in Glastonbury a university or even a new political movement; and so on - none of which ideas has proved to be the destined next chapter in the history of the place.

We can remind ourselves of the statement in the latter part of the "High History" concerning the Tor: "Of this castle and one other" (*could the*

other be the Mount of Olives?) "will be kindled the fire that shall burn up the world and put it to an end". (That sounds like the end of the millennium.) We have a prophecy here, but whether from God or devil I know not. There is a Biblical test for a prophet (*Deuteronomy 18, 22*):- if the prophecy does not come true the Lord did not speak it.

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Various other things have happened in Glastonbury from time to time which in a town devoid of other tales could grow into little legends. In 1972 a Glastonbury waiter blew 86 smoke-rings from one puff and secured himself a place in the Guinness Book of Records. And in 1973 a happy man who felt like spreading a little sunshine around stood in the High Street giving away £5 notes. He was completely genuine; he had just been offered a better job and wanted to cheer people up. And were the people happy? No: they sent for the police!

It is good to see that in the local government re-organisation of 1974, when much of what was Somerset was transferred into the new county of Avon, Glastonbury remained in Somerset - the summer-land. The legend of Christ's visit says He came to the summer-land.

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Somehow we have left out St. Benignus. In a town without such a web of legends his story would be one of the leading folklore-tales. But in the Glastonbury legend network there is so much else that he seems to have been relegated to what is almost an appendix at the end of the book. He really existed, and here is his story.

Beon, or Benignus as he is more commonly called (though probably his real name was Beon and the real Benignus was someone else who had no connection with Glastonbury) was an Irishman who shortly after 460 A.D. was sent to Glastonbury by an angel. On the

advice of St. Patrick who was at the abbey, Beon became a hermit. He set forth walking until his staff (like another, four centuries previously) put forth buds as he planted it. There, he built his hermitage. This was at Meare, three miles north-west of Glastonbury. A spring of drinking-water rose out of the ground at his command.

He constructed a causeway over the marshes to Glastonbury and used it frequently as he went to and from his prayers in the wattle church. One night he was waylaid on his causeway by a frightful demon. The apparition seems however to have been more physical than one might expect of a spirit, for when Beon set about it with a stick the demon fell into a bottomless pool where it quickly sank and was seen no more.

When Beon died his mortal remains were buried at Meare, but in 1091 they were transferred to the abbey, and apparently cured several onlookers of worms. A monk who spoke a trifle lightly of St. Beon had a vision of him, and again we encounter a surprisingly solid spirit, for the vision boxed the monk's ears.

Under the probably-erroneous name of St. Benignus his memory survives in the town, for the smaller of the two Anglican churches (the one about three hundred yards west of the abbey, on the Stonehenge-and-Canterbury ley line) is dedicated to St. Benignus or St. Benedict.

The alternative dedication to St. Benedict is not surprising in this town which had what was probably the first Benedictine abbey in England.

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Now that you have read about the Glastonbury tales, explore the district for yourself. A good place to start if you have the energy is the Tor: from its

summit on a clear day you can obtain a bird's-eye view of the district and see many of the places mentioned in the tales. This book closes with a description (most of which was originally published in the alternative society's Glastonbury magazine "Torc") of how to pick out some of these places of interest from the Tor:-

THE VIEW FROM THE TOR (see fig. 33, on page 182)

First let us get our bearings. As we stand by the concrete "trig point" on top of the Tor (521ft.) with our backs to the tower, we are looking more or less due east. At the foot of the Tor is an apple-orchard; beyond it is a farmhouse with white door and red roof; beyond that is a village about two miles away which is West Pennard; and the hill behind the village is Pennard Hill. The name is interesting: "*pen*" is an old word for "hill", "*ard*" is Celtic for "hill", and "*hill*" is English for "hill" - everyone agrees it's a hill! The ley line which connects Glastonbury Abbey, Stonehenge and Canterbury Cathedral in one straight line runs to the left of Pennard Hill. Beyond the hill is the festival site (Pilton) on the ley line.

If you have walked up the Tor along the long mound from the gate by the main road, passing the three ancient stones near the foot of the Tor, you have walked up another ley line - this runs from St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall, through the Tor, and north-east to Avebury in Wiltshire. It then continues, it is said, to the east coast on the boundaries of Norfolk and Suffolk.

These two ley lines cross on the ridge about half a mile north-east of the Tor. Behind the ridge is Stonedown, where there was until early this century a druid grove of oaks. A couple of oaks estimated at over two thousand years old still live.

Looking over West Pennard on a clear day, a flat topped bump can be seen on the horizon. That is Cley Hill, near the Wiltshire town of Warminster, famous for its UFOs. Cley Hill still has traces of "ring roads" something like those on the Tor which made a labyrinth by which the druids circled the Tor seven times (four clockwise and three anti) to reach the summit.

Turning ninety degrees to the right, so that we look to the south, we see a tall monument about three miles off: a memorial to Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, who died in 1814. The hilltop beyond it is a British camp, Dundon. (This camp is not Camelot; that honour is claimed by Cadbury Camp ten miles south-east of Dundon.)

The Somerset zodiac is spread before us, its centre being not far from Butleigh Court which we can see in the flat country. The Hood monument is on the head of taurus. Leo (three miles long) is over the hills just to the left of the monument, outlined by ancient roads and ditches and the River Cary. Dundon Camp is the head of the giant. If we glance towards West Pennard again we are looking across the figures of capricorn and sagittarius. The Tor is on aquarius.

Butleigh Court has a couple of legends of its own. Built in 1850, it was said to be doomed under a curse to be derelict within a hundred years because it was built on land which had once been part of the churchyard; and the tale came true in 1947 when it suffered a somewhat similar fate to Glastonbury Abbey - a scoundrel stole the lead off the roof. In the 1970s however, plans were made for it (the Court, not the Abbey!) to be rebuilt.

A Grenville steam carriage built in 1875 was "re-discovered" at Butleigh Court in the late 1930s and is now in the Bristol City Museum. It is probably the oldest self-propelled passenger-carrying road vehicle in working order in the world.

Looking now from the top of the Tor towards the west, on the edge of Glastonbury we see (just to the left of

the main road to the nearby town of Street) Wearyall Hill which forms one of the fishes in the pisces figure. The bridge Pomparles (meaning "dangerous bridge") which is said to be the spot where King Arthur in his dying hour returned his sword Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake, is just beyond the hill, on the Street road.

Wearyall Hill is the spot where it is said Joseph of Arimathaea planted his staff, which grew into the Glastonbury Holy Thorn, when in 63 A.D. he first brought Britain the gospel of how Jesus Christ had died and risen to be the Saviour of all who leave their old ways and turn to Him. The original thorn was cut down during the Reformation but several cuttings from it still survive and continue its habit of blossoming on (or about!) Old Christmas Day.

Whether Joseph came to the hill by ship or on foot is not clear. It is quite feasible that he came by ship. Look to the west. On a clear day you can see the Bristol Channel (14 miles) - and from Wearyall Hill to the sea the moor (Sedgemoor) is only twenty feet above mean sea level. The Bristol Channel is funnel-shaped and therefore has forty-foot tides (twenty feet above and twenty below mean sea level) so even today only the sea wall prevents the highest tides from reaching Glastonbury.

On a very clear day it is possible to see from the Tor right across the channel. In line with the pale River Brue which runs through the plain, Aberthaw power station on the Welsh coast is visible. A bit to the left (i.e. directly over Glastonbury gasworks) the two gaunt blocks of the Hinkley Point nuclear power station stand out about twenty miles distant, and to their left the Somerset coast stretches away to disappear near Hurlestone Point, so named because of the legend that St. Michael competed there with the devil at hurling stones into the sea. Between the Tor and Hurlestone Point stretches an irregular line of present or former

dedications to St. Michael - at Bawdrip, Puriton, Stolford, Nether Stowey, Dunster and Minehead.

To the right of the Huntspill River, the flat-topped Brent Knoll (457ft.) - another St. Michael connection - stands lonely in the plain, and on its right the island of Steep Holm (St. Michael again) in mid-channel. (Ider, one of King Arthur's knights, is said to have slain three giants or monsters which inhabited Brent Knoll. Gildas, a sixth-century historian-monk who is buried at Glastonbury, lived for a time on Steep Holm, and after the Battle of Hastings King Harold's mother took refuge there.)

Another step right, and the Mendip Hills drop into the sea at Brean Down, from which Marconi sent the world's first over-sea wireless transmission - over the waters of the Bristol Channel to Steep Holm in the late nineteenth century.

In the far distance the Welsh Mountains - some of them significant to the druids - are faintly visible.

About four miles from the Tor, among the trees where the River Brue bends, is the village of Meare. The marshes here were the site of one of the two lake villages (inhabited about the time of Julius Caesar or earlier) where finely-decorated pottery and a dugout canoe have been found. The other lake village was at Godney further to the right and nearer to Glastonbury.

Amid the lowlands is the spot where King Alfred burnt the cakes. He fought various battles in this area, and behind us there is a monument to him - Alfred's Tower about fourteen miles away in the hills beyond West Pennard.

Close at hand we can see Glastonbury. But can we see the abbey? Surprise surprise, no. It is hidden behind the little hill at the foot of the Tor - Chalice Hill, with its chalybeate spring and well,

Chalice Well. Here (according to one story) Joseph of Arimathaea buried the cup used by Christ at the Last Supper. Subsequently this cup and the pre-Christian legend about a search for a "cauldron of plenty" became confused and gave us the legend of the Holy Grail in quest of which King Arthur and his knights rode far and wide.

To complete our circle let us turn north. Atop the Mendips the thousand-foot television mast stands on the horizon (its top is the highest point in Somerset) and the town of Wells can be seen below it. Wells Cathedral can be picked out on a clear day. About three miles left of the T.V. mast is the tiny Mendip-top village of Priddy which Jesus is said to have visited as a boy. This ties in with the legend that Jesus visited Glastonbury as a young man (accompanying Joseph of Arimathaea who came regularly in connection with the Roman lead trade) and erected a wattle building for Himself on the site of the present St. Mary's (St. Joseph's) chapel. Jesus has promised to return to this world...

Rely on Him.

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